



## **Documenting Resilience Programmes currently delivered in Co. Sligo and Co. Leitrim**

*Identifying resilience programmes and supports available  
nationally and internationally*

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## Acronyms

ACE – Adverse Childhood Experiences

CAMHS – Children and Adolescents Mental Health Services

CAWT – Cooperation and Working Together

CBT – Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

CEO – Chief Executive Officer

CLG – Company Limited by Guarantee

CSO – General Statistics Office

CYPP – Children and Young People’s Plan

CYPSC – Children and Young People’s Services Committee

DBT – Dialectical Behavioural Therapy

ECCE – Early Child Care and Education

ELSA – Emotional Literacy Support Assistants

EU – European Union

HSE – Health Service Executive

IY – Incredible years

LGBTI+ – Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender +

MACE – Multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences

MH – Mental Health

M-PACT – Moving Parents and Children Together

PMVT – Peter McVerry Trust

SEL – Social and Emotional Learning

SFP – Strengthening Families Programme

SICAP – Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme

SRCC – Sligo Rape Crisis Centre

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## Executive Summary (Research Summary)

Pre Covid-19, mental health challenges for young people were on the increase. Due to restrictions and the change in life, or at least as a direct result of these changes, this is increasing further. The wealth gap is also increasing and from research conducted by Social Justice Ireland (2021) and Peter McVerry Trust (2021), 26% of children in Ireland are now in poverty with over 2,500 school age children homeless. New research from the Irish Medical Journal showed a rise in Emergency Department hospital admissions by over 50% during the summer of 2020 in comparison to the previous year. Researchers conclude that *‘following the initial COVID-19 lockdown, Emergency Department presentations by children for acute mental health (MH) care increased significantly over prior years, with this increase sustained throughout 2020. Long-term stressors linked to the pandemic may be leading to chronic MH problems, warranting increased funding of MH services as part of the response to Covid-19* (McDonnell et al., 2021).

*“The overall need has increased throughout the pandemic. The cohort of students who experienced resilience/emotional need prior to the pandemic have been disproportionately negatively impacted upon”.*

- Stakeholder statement

The level of need is a concern and the level of funding is a concern. With increases in poverty, mental health challenges and homelessness, this need will likely increase greatly in the years ahead. The need for resilience programme has always been there but the level of need for them now is not something anyone expected on the onset of lockdowns. The effects of adverse effects experienced in childhood and adolescents have been found to lead to negative outcomes in later life (Blodgett et al., 2018; Plumb et al., 2019; WAVE Trust, 2018) and to combat this, the only line of defence is ongoing programming and access to specialist support services.

In Ireland, there are a number of programmes which have been in use for some years and have shown good results. These include the Incredible Years (IY) Programme suite, Parents Plus and Strengthening Families. Other more youth focused programmes such as the FRIENDS suite have also shown to have good results when building resilience in young people. The Lifestart programme and early education settings, primary and secondary level school development and wellbeing curriculums also play a major role in providing universal programming. Charities and voluntary organisations have also

developed some very effective programmes including the Youth Work Ireland 'Be well' Programme and the Foroige 'Be Healthy, Be Happy' Programme.

Currently, across Europe, there appears to be a drive to create inter-country development teams, taking from the knowledge and expertise of each participating country when developing resilience building and wellbeing programmes. This drive is built on a shared vision that a 'whole population or school' approach may be the best way to build resilience. 'RESCUR Surfing the Waves' has been developed by experts from 6 European universities. The programme has been built to empower vulnerable children at risk of early school leaving, absenteeism, disengagement, bullying, social inclusion and marginalisation. The programme consists of a Teacher's Guide, a Parent's Guide and manuals for the early years and early and late primary school years and is available in 7 languages. The development of the 'The Boost Project' has been funded by the EU Horizon 2020 and the development team comes from several countries across Europe including Norway, Spain and Belgium. The programme will use a holistic approach to promote mental wellbeing in primary school children.

Sligo Leitrim CYPSC recognises the need for resilience building programming. The population of Sligo Leitrim is 113,920 with 24.6% of the population under the age of 18 (Census, 2016). According to Pobal (2016), 23.7% of the population are 'at risk of poverty'; 25.9% of the population suffer some form of deprivation' and; 13.4% of the population are in 'consistent poverty'. This level of need across the county will likely have a negative effect on children and young people if interventions are not delivered on an ongoing basis at both a universal and target level. This research, commissioned by Sligo Leitrim CYPSC through the CYPSC Active and Healthy Working Group, and led by the CYPSC 'Resilience Steering Group', sought to document resilience programmes being delivered in Sligo and Leitrim through schools and services and to identify the barriers to attendance and delivery across the counties.

Through consultation with the participating stakeholders, 6 Key messages about the needs of children and young people who attend these services and schools were found. 15 Key messages about the barriers to attendance for children, young people, parents and families as outlined by stakeholders were found; 7 Key messages about the barriers to delivery that services and schools have experienced were found and 37 resilience building programmes being delivered to 0-18 year olds through schools and services in Sligo and Leitrim were identified.

## ❖ *6 Key messages about the needs of children and young people who attend these services and schools:*

There is a high level of need for resilience programmes for some children and young people and to meet the needs of these children and young people with programming, programmes need to be intensive and ongoing.

1. There is a high level of need for resilience programmes for some children and young people. To meet the needs of these children and young people, programmes need to be intensive and ongoing.
2. There is a high prevalence of anxiety, low-mood, lack of confidence and lack of coping skills amongst young people in general.
3. Covid-19 has heightened the level of need and increased challenges with mental health amongst children and young people – three quarters of the participants stated that they have seen a significant increase in mental health problems, in particular social anxiety, and in the emotional and social need of children and young people since the pandemic began.
4. Some young people only require low to medium support around building resilience and could benefit from a more universal approach to programming.
5. Support is required on an emotional and social level using targeted and universal support.
6. The main areas of need appear to be around confidence and self-esteem, coping skills and low levels of resilience, understanding emotions, and regulating them and communicating what exactly it is that is going on with them.



192 people working within schools and services were given the opportunity to participate in the research. In many instances, several people were contacted from the same organisations and in this case, only one worker completed the survey. All schools were contacted in both counties. In total, 29 completed surveys were returned from 18 services, 8 schools and 1 college. The service uptake was significantly higher than schools and it did capture a fair representation of the services that work with children and young people. The lower uptake of schools may have been a resource issue with schools currently seeing challenges with staffing and high levels of staff and pupil absentees. The tables below show the services who participated, the role of the participant working for that service who completed the survey and, the number of primary and post primary education settings who participated.

Table 1.1: Participant Service, role, and operation profile

County	Service and role
Sligo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sligo Springboard Family Support Service- Assistant Project Manager</li> <li>• Tubbercurry Family and Childcare Resource Centre - Project Coordinator/Manager</li> <li>• Tubbercurry Family Resource Centre - Development Worker</li> <li>• Co. Sligo LEADER Partnership CLG. - SICAP Community Development Officer</li> <li>• Sligo Traveller Support Group - Primary Health Care Worker</li> <li>• Sligo Rape Crisis Centre - CEO</li> </ul>
Leitrim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children's Disability Network Team - Community Facilitator for Disability</li> <li>• Leitrim County Childcare Committee - Support &amp; Development Worker</li> </ul>
Both	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• M-PACT (Moving Parents and Children Together) Programme – Service Lead</li> <li>• Youth Work Ireland North Connaught - Youth Action Project - Youth Justice Worker / Smily L.G.B.T.+ Youth Project - Youth Worker / Regional Director</li> <li>• HSE Alcohol &amp; Substance Misuse Counselling Service</li> <li>• Foróige –Project Leader</li> <li>• Home Youth Liaison Service - Youth Support Worker attached to Social Work Department</li> <li>• Traveller/Roma Community - Public Health Nurse</li> <li>• Family Resource Centre - Support Service Coordinator</li> <li>• Sligo/Leitrim Home Youth Liaison Service - Manager</li> <li>• Lifestart Supporting Parents CLG - Assistant Manager</li> <li>• Ballymote Family Resource Centre - Coordinator</li> </ul>
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Table 1.2: Number of participating schools/colleges and county

County	School/College Type
Sligo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 Primary Schools – School Principals</li> <li>• 2 Secondary Schools – School Principals</li> <li>• 1 College – IT Sligo – Lecturer</li> </ul>
Leitrim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 Primary Schools – School Principals</li> <li>• 1 Secondary School – School Principals</li> </ul>

The table below shows the list of evidence-based programmes, programmes for transition and other interventions used to build resilience in Sligo and Leitrim currently being delivered in Sligo and Leitrim.

Table: 1.3 Resilience programmes and resilience building initiatives delivered in Sligo  
Leitrim

Age Group	Programme Name/ Details/ Organisations Delivering
<p><b>Early years (parents of 0-5 years old and children aged 0-5)</b></p>	<p><b><u>Evidence/curriculum based, formal, national programmes/initiatives</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Parents Plus</i> – Early Years programme (Delivered by Foróige; Lifestart)</li> <li>• <i>Growing Child by Lifestart</i> (Delivered by Lifestart)</li> <li>• <i>Circle of Security</i> (Delivered by Lifestart)</li> <li>• <i>Fun Friends</i> (Delivered by Primary School)</li> <li>• <i>Aistear and Síolta Programme/Curriculum</i> (Delivered by Family Resource Centre; Sligo Springboard; Tubbercurry Family and Childcare Resource Centre)</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Transition Programmes (Preschool to primary school)</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>At Home in School</i> (Delivered by Lifestart)</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Other interventions:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive parenting skills training (Delivered by Youth Work Ireland North Connacht; Lifestart)</li> <li>• Parent and toddler groups - for healthy child development and social and emotional support for parents (Delivered by Ballymote Family Resource Centre)</li> <li>• Play Therapy – for healthy child development and relationship building (Delivered by Sligo Springboard; Tubbercurry and Childcare Resource Centre; Ballymote Family Resource Centre)</li> <li>• Family Visitor Service – social and emotional support for parents (Early Years Services)</li> <li>• Child and infant mental health project (Early Years Services)</li> </ul>

<p><b>Primary aged Children (parents of and children aged 5-12)</b></p>	<p><b><u>Evidence curriculum based, formal, national programmes/initiatives</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Rainbow Programme</i> (Delivered by Tubbercurry Family and Childcare Resource Centre)</li> <li>• <i>Parents Plus</i> (Delivered by Foróige; Lifestart)</li> <li>• <i>Stay Safe Programme</i> (Deliver by Primary Schools)</li> <li>• <i>Relax Kids Programme</i> (Delivered by Tubbercurry Family Resource Centre and Childcare Centre)</li> <li>• <i>Friends for Life</i> (Delivered by Secondary School; Leitrim County Childcare Committee)</li> <li>• <i>Mindful Matters</i> (Delivered by Primary School)</li> <li>• <i>Walk Tall</i> (Delivered by Primary Schools)</li> <li>• <i>Express Yourself</i> (Delivered by Ballymote Family Resource Centre)</li> <li>• <i>M-Pact Programme</i> (Delivered by M-Pact)</li> <li>• <i>The Decider Programme</i> (Delivered by Youth Work Ireland North Connacht; Foróige; Family Resource Centre)</li> <li>• <i>Level Up</i> by Foróige</li> <li>• Primary school wellbeing curriculum</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Transition Programmes (Primary school to Secondary School)</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Belonging Plus</i> (Delivered by Secondary School)</li> <li>• Bespoke transition programmes (using Foróige programme design)</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Other interventions:</u></b></p> <p>Several services noted sports, arts, cooking and camps – these include Sligo Traveller Support Group; the Family Resource Centres and Schools).</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ELSA Support (Delivered by Youth Work Ireland, North Connacht)</li> <li>• Play Therapy (Delivered by Sligo Springboard; Tubbercurry and Childcare Resource Centre; Ballymote Family Resource Centre)</li> <li>• Counselling – brief supportive (Delivered by Ballymote Family Resource Centre; Tubbercurry Family and Childcare Resource Centre)</li> <li>• Coding (Delivered by Ballymote Family Resource Centre)</li> <li>• Sports</li> <li>• Arts</li> <li>• Cookery skills</li> <li>• Youth camps</li> </ul>
<p><b>Secondary aged young people and programmes delivered to parents of young people (aged 12-18)</b></p>	<p><b><u>Evidence curriculum based, formal, national programmes/initiatives</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A life of Choices</i> (Delivered by Youth Work Ireland North Connacht)</li> <li>• <i>Decider Skills Training</i> (Delivered by Youth Work Ireland North Connacht; Foróige; Sligo/Leitrim Home Youth Liaison Service; Family Resource Centre)</li> <li>• <i>GROW</i> (Delivered by Youth Work Ireland North Connacht)</li> <li>• <i>Relationship Window</i> - Restorative Practice (Delivered by Youth Work Ireland North Connacht)</li> <li>• <i>Confidence Boot camp</i> - age 11-14 (Delivered by Tubbercurry Family Resource Centre)</li> <li>• <i>Friends for Life</i> (Delivered by Foróige; Secondary School; Leitrim County Childcare Committee)</li> <li>• <i>M-PACT</i> (Delivered by M-PACT)</li> <li>• <i>REAL U; Health and Wellbeing Programme; Be Healthy, Be Happy; Leadership for Life Programme; Sound Surfers; Level Up</i> (Developed and delivered by Foróige)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Putting the Pieces Together</i> - Drug Use Prevention Programme (Delivered by Foróige)</li> <li>• <i>Be Well; B4U Decide</i> (Developed and delivered Youth Work Ireland)</li> <li>• <i>Healthy Vs Unhealthy Programme</i> (Delivered by Sligo Leitrim Home Youth Liaison Service)</li> <li>• <i>Parents Plus - Working Things Out Programme</i> (Delivered by Sligo Leitrim Home Youth Liaison Service; Foróige)</li> <li>• <i>Helping Hands Programme</i> (Delivered by Sligo Leitrim Home Youth Liaison Service;</li> <li>• <i>Provoking Thoughts Programme</i> (Delivered by Sligo Leitrim Home Youth Liaison Service)</li> <li>• <i>Copping On Programme</i> (Delivered by Sligo Leitrim Home Youth Liaison Service)</li> <li>• <i>SPHE Curriculum</i> for secondary schools</li> <li>• <i>Consent and Disclosure Programme</i> (Delivered by Sligo Rape Crisis Centre)</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Transition Programmes (Transitions to Adulthood)</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The Ready, Steady, Life Programme</i> (Foróige)</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Other interventions:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As above plus; Guest speakers on resilience and mindfulness (Delivered in Secondary School)</li> </ul>
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*“Young people need support to build coping skills, self-esteem, understanding their emotions and emotional regulation skills”.*

- Stakeholder Statement

The variety of programmes being delivered in Sligo and Leitrim is wide. A large number of staff working in services and schools in both counties are also trained in the evidence-based programmes Triple P Parenting Programme and the Decider Programme. Being border counties, Sligo and Leitrim also benefit from programmes provided by the MACE project, and from programmes which are being facilitated through the 'Our Generation' partners. Both early intervention initiatives, they offer further opportunities and routes to providing resilience building and wellbeing programmes to children and young people across both counties.

❖ *15 Key messages about the barriers to attendance for children, young people, parents and families as outlined by stakeholders:*

1. Limited travel options are a barrier to attendance across both counties for children, young people and parents. Lack of public services in rural areas and transport options to urban areas where the services are delivered is minimal and makes attendance at services and participation in weekly programmes difficult.
2. There is a stigma around certain services. Young people or their families do not want to be associated with this. This stigma prevents young people from attending the services/ programmes.
3. There are high levels of anxiety amongst young people across both counties and services report young people not wanting to leave their house or participate in any form of group work with others.
4. Lack of commitment by parents and young people and in some instances, parent's lack of commitment and support results in the child/young person not being able to attend.
5. In some instances, group programming can make parents feel that their parenting ability is being questioned and they need to be reassured that the programmes are focused on the child's development and ways to enhance it.
6. Lack of information about programming can be an obstacle at times. This can mean that potential participants don't have the information they need to make a fully informed decision on whether to attend.
7. A lack of awareness around the benefits of programmes can result in low attendance.

8. Childcare can be a barrier to attendance, especially for parents with 0-2.5 year olds.
9. There are concerns around motivation to attend and the capacity to participate in programmes for some parents.
10. Some young people need specialist support prior to or running alongside the programme. Their needs are greater and require further support to build the capacity to engage fully.
11. Finding times for programmes that suit parents can prove difficult.
12. Services have found that cultural difference and language differences is a barrier for some children, young people and parents across both counties.
13. For some young people who may be or have been involved in criminal behaviour/activity, having the option to attend programmes rather than been ordered to by the courts prevents them from attending.
14. A barrier to consistent attendance for young people attending addiction services to avail of programmes and support is the active use of substances while engaged.
15. Young people with disabilities find it harder to engage in group-based programmes.

❖ *7 Key messages about the barriers to delivery that services and schools have experienced:*

1. Transport options for some participants are limited and this can result in them not being able to attend programmes. If attendance or uptake is low, it can result in programmes not being facilitated.
2. Access to specialist services at the point the young person requires support can prove difficult and this can be a barrier to delivery. E.g. external trainers, therapists.
3. Having a space to work from can sometimes prove difficult for both schools and services. Issues around scheduling and room occupancy can occur and become a barrier to delivery.



4. A barrier to delivery can be result of external pressures to fulfil a curriculum or reach a target number. This focus can prevent programmes being delivered and completed.
5. The time constraints of funded projects are a barrier for delivery.
6. It is important that relationships are built upon first with families in order to ensure buy in from that family. If this relationship is not there, it can be harder to retain parents.
7. There is a cultural and language barrier to delivery in some instances.

Overall, the majority of participants agreed that participants benefited from resilience building programmes. Some of the benefits noted by stakeholders include;

- Increased level of emotional/ feeling vocabulary which led to enhanced understanding of emotions and enhanced communication disclosing challenges or struggles.
- Improved confidence and self esteem
- Reduced anxiety and improved coping skills
- Better able to understand self and others
- School readiness improved
- Better child/ parent relationships
- Better child/school relationships
- Overall higher levels of wellbeing
- Gives participants a social network
- Awareness of emotional triggers
- Higher educational attainment and retention
- Less absences
- Increased motivation
- Gives them a sense of connection to the community
- Feel less alone
- Increased ability and capacity to deal with and mange everyday life challenges and adversities
- Greater belief in self.

Findings from this research show that Covid-19 has increased the level of anxiety amongst children and young people in Sligo Leitrim. Findings also show that young

people need support in understanding and regulating emotions, in building coping skills and enhancing self-esteem. The benefits outlined above show that through participation in resilience programmes children and young people build the skills they need to be more resilient and able to manage everyday challenges. Through consultation, 15 barriers to attendance and 7 barriers to delivery were found. These barriers show that young people are struggling with mental health and that often they lack the capacity to participate in groups and need intensive support prior to or during programme work. Flexibility to work with children and young people at this level, in a tailor-made way, appears to be the only option for some young people, especially those who are more vulnerable.

The variety of resources in both counties is wide and overall services and schools appear to have a number of evidence-based programmes that they deliver on an ongoing basis to children, young people and families. Overall, 36 resilience building programmes were identified through the consultation. It was found that a high number of staff in both counties working with children and young people are trained in the Decider Programme and Triple P, both evidence-based programmes. This is evidence of the use of a coordinated response to building resilience in the counties. It was found that programme providers are committed to their work and if need arose, are prepared to retrain and upskill. In the Early Years' infrastructure in both counties, of those services that participated, there appears to be less resources available and used by them, along with less variety in programming overall than by the services who work with other age groups. A study conducted by researchers at IT Sligo found through interview with Early Child Care and Education (ECCE) professionals that *'while many of the components that enhance resilience are present in early years' settings, they are happening as an indirect consequence of other activities'* (Walsh and Kane, 2015) Walsh and Kane (2015) concluded *that developmental psychology taught to ECCE students should be modified to include a greater focus on nurturing resilience in young children*. This gap in provision has recently been offset through the training of a number of workers across both counties in the Triple P Parenting Programme. This programme has been rolled out and will continue to be delivered.

The scope of this research is that this report can be used as a tool to identify new programmes which may work in both counties. It can also be used as a tool to learn more about the barriers faced by children and young people to attending and participating in resilience building opportunities. Barriers to delivery have also been

identified with very implementable suggestions offered by both the researcher and the stakeholders themselves on how to break them down. The finding of this research found 6 key messages about the needs of children and young people in Sligo and Leitrim. The research noted several benefits identified by programme providers in the children and young people they work with. This shows that the programmes used thus far have worked with the cohort they were aimed at.

Suggestions and pointers are offered from a consideration standpoint in that from the results of the research, the work is being carried out to deliver programmes to children and young people and therefore, it cannot be concluded that anything needs to be added. Research suggests that a coordinated response to resilience whether in schools or through services within the community, is the most effective approach to building resilience in children and young people. Some children and young people may have higher needs than others. Specialised support should be made available to them to ensure they can participate in resilience programmes or initiatives. Programmes at a universal level and targeted level are important for them. Exploring what a whole county or whole area approach could look like and how it could be managed is worth considering. The resource sharing opportunities, the space sharing opportunities, and support and expertise sharing opportunities are endless. For all to work together with a shared vision aimed at building resilience across both counties could create a Sligo and Leitrim that not only nurtures resilience in its current residents but that ensures stability for its future residents.

*“Do not judge me by my success, judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up again.”*

**— Nelson Mandela**

## 1. Research Rationale and Scope

Nationally, pre-pandemic, Ireland was seeing a rise in mental health problems amongst young people. Between 2012 and 2016 there was a 26% increase in the number of referrals to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Jigsaw, the National Centre for Youth Mental Health, reported that 39% of its users experienced anxiety, 31% reported low mood, 25% reported issues with stress, 17% reported sleep disturbances, 15% said they had difficulties with anger, 14.5% had mental health issues due to family problems, 12% said they had low self-esteem and self-criticised, while a further 15% had suicidal thoughts (Jigsaw Annual Report, 2017). Since the pandemic, the need for specialist mental health services has increased significantly. According to new research published in the Irish Medical Journal carried out by Barrett et al., (2021) exploring youth mental health admissions to Emergency Departments during the first year of the pandemic, mental health admissions decreased in the first four months (March to June) of the pandemic but rose significantly by 52% in July and August (2020: 218; 2019: 143). This rose again by 45.6% in September to December (2020: 552 ;2019: 379). The reason for the significant drop at the beginning of the pandemic and the dramatic increase 4 months in is unknown.

The level of resilience needed to manage and navigate this current uncertainty is high and for children and young people, the need to educate and facilitate programmes based on building resilience and positive wellbeing is something all local and national authorities should be focused on right now. Thankfully, our national frameworks for children, young people and families are on point in regard to wellbeing and positive outcomes but there is a national concern about where the funding to implement them properly will come from, especially when it is hard to predict what the economy will look like a year from now. The national debt has risen by over €30billion as a result of the pandemic ([www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie)). With 26% of all children currently in poverty in Ireland (Social Justice Ireland, 2021), 3,333 children and young people homeless (Peter McVerry Trust ,2021), schools, hospitals and health care services heavily under resourced, the approach going forward needs to look at what resources we have now and how can we utilise them.

Early intervention via targeted and universal approaches are crucial if children and young people living in adversity are to flourish. CYPSC, on a national level and a local one, recognise the importance of early intervention and the use of integrated, shared approaches around resilience and this can be seen in the Sligo Leitrim CYPP 2020-2022.

This research, commissioned by Sligo Leitrim CYPSC through the CYPSC Active and Healthy Working Group, and led by the CYPSC 'Resilience Steering Group', seeks to document resilience programmes being delivered in the Sligo and Leitrim through schools and services. Through consultation with stakeholders, this research will gauge the programmes currently being delivered as well as identify the barriers to attendance and delivery in both counties. The findings of this research will give the funders an image of what is happening across both counties as well as expose any potential gaps in provision. The literature base for this research has been developed as a brief directory of evidence-based programmes (national and international) which have been shown to build resilience, enhance confidence and self-esteem, increase emotional vocabulary, emotional regulation and emotional awareness, increase a sense of connectivity as well as improve relationships in the child or young person's life.

At a local level the scope of this research is that the findings (secondary and primary findings) can be used as a resource to explore programme options, to enhance awareness around the barriers to attendance and delivery, to understand the needs of children and young people further, to increase awareness around the resources available in both counties and to understand the level of commitment from schools and services going forward in the drive to build resilience across both counties. Nationally, the scope of this report is similar and could act as a tool for schools and services to explore evidence-based programme options.

## **2. Research Methodology**

Through consultation with 29 stakeholders comprising of 18 services, 5 primary schools, 3 secondary schools and 1 college;

- ❖ 6 Key messages about the needs of children and young people who attend these services and schools were found
- ❖ 15 Key messages about the barriers to attendance for children, young people, parents and families as outlined by stakeholders were found
- ❖ 7 Key messages about the barriers to delivery that services and schools have experienced were found
- ❖ 36 resilience building programmes being delivered to 0-18 year olds through schools and services in Sligo and Leitrim were identified

### **Consultation and research tools**

The research sought to gain information from stakeholders regarding resilience programmes they deliver currently to 0-18 years old in Sligo and Leitrim. Stakeholders were consulted through an online survey. This can be viewed in the Appendices (Appendix 1.1)

### **Research Participants**

In total, 197 staff working within services and schools across both counties were invited to participate in this research. In some instances, several individuals all worked for the same service and in these instances one worker was consulted. 29 responses were returned. Participating stakeholders were from both schools and services across Sligo and Leitrim. Responses were returned by 18 services, 5 primary schools, 3 secondary schools and 1 college. The research group and the individual projects collaborated with the researcher to identify potential participants. In line with the requirements of GDPR, all potential research participants consented to the sharing of their contact details prior to the researcher contacting them by phone.

### **Research Challenges**

The survey was live for 2 working weeks. This time constraint may have affected the engagement numbers especially for schools. Currently, schools are under-resourced and this is perhaps why the uptake of schools was low. However, schools follow a state led curriculum around well-being and this curriculum can be easily accessed.

### 3. Research Background

Building resilience in children and young people is a priority for parents, schools and services alike. The importance of this as we move through life can be the difference in meeting our full potential and not meeting our potential at all. In regard to reaching positive outcomes in later life, resilience is a key component and without it how else does one navigate the struggles of everyday life. Sligo Leitrim CYPSC recognise this and engaged an independent researcher to identify and document resilience programmes currently being delivered in Sligo and Leitrim by services and schools to 0-18 year olds.

The Office for the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, now the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, established the Children Service Committees in 2007 (later changed to Children and Young People's Services Committees) with the purpose to improve outcomes for children and their families at a local and community level. 27 committees now work across Ireland to improve outcomes for children and young people aged 0-24 years of age. CYPSC is a consortium of agencies which work with children, young people and families, that come together to engage in joint planning of services and supports for children and young people. The importance of inter-agency working is emphasised in *The National Policy Framework for Children and Youth People 'Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures'* 2014-2020 and CYPSC is tasked with the role of organising and maintaining links at a local and community level. CYPSC 'Shared Vision, Next Steps 2019-2024' paper continues the message of collaborative work to improve outcomes while creating a roadmap for committees throughout the country.

*'The shared vision for CYPSC over the next five years is to consolidate and build upon the positive work to date. The CYPSC infrastructure and intelligence of inter-agency working will be used to create the optimum circumstances to advance local and national priorities to enable effective systems change in local communities. Cultivating leadership through 'joined up working' and 'joined-up thinking', both locally and nationally, will be at the forefront of our efforts. CYPSC will be supported in their mission to improve outcomes for children and young people through coordinated, responsive and innovative services'.*

(Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2019)

Every 3 years, each CYPSC is tasked to develop a plan which is known as the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP). The CYPP aims to achieve better outcomes for children and young people in line with the 5 National Outcomes for Children. This plan essentially provides a map of priority actions to be followed and met by member organisations collaboratively in their respective counties.

The Sligo Leitrim CYPSC was established in 2014 with members from statutory, community and voluntary providers of services to children, young people and families. Since then, the committee has developed two Children and Young People's Plans; CYPP 2017-2019 and CYPP 2020-2022. Each plan has been quality assured by the National CYPP Review Group.

Table 2.1: Sligo Leitrim CYPSC CYPP (2020-2022) Summary

<b>Outcome Area</b>	<b>Local Priority Area</b>
<b>1. Active and healthy, physical and mental wellbeing</b>	1. Nutrition and Food Poverty 2. Child and Youth Mental Health 3. Healthy Choices
<b>2. Achieving full potential in learning and development</b>	1. Education and Learning 2. Parent/Guardian Support
<b>3. Safe and protected from harm</b>	1. Safety 2. Trauma awareness 3. Violence
<b>4. Economic security and opportunity</b>	1. Transitions to adulthood for vulnerable young people 2. Young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) 3. Overcoming barriers



<b>5. Connected, respected and contributing to their world</b>	1. Participation (0 - 25 years) 2. Connection (0 - 25 years) 3. Social Inclusion (0 - 25 years)
<b>Change Management Actions</b>	1. Collaborative Working 2. Senior Level Commitment 3. Policy Alignment

The CYPSC Active and Healthy Working Group focus is on implementing the actions of the CYPP 2020-2022 and;

- Reviewing priority areas including prevention and early intervention and child and youth mental health.
- Actively seeking and considering feedback regarding identification of need and developing a report which seeks to provide strategic direct for CYPSC.
- Identifying needs which may be addressed by optimising the collective capacity of the partner agencies.

In July 2021, a 'Resilience Steering Group' was set up under the Active and Healthy Working Group to identify the Resilience Programmes previously/currently being delivered across Sligo and Leitrim, by both schools and services. By conducting this research and identifying the work which is or has been done around resilience in both counties, the steering group will achieve a priority action of the Sligo Leitrim CYPP 2020-2022, under outcome 1 of the plan. In October 2021, the Resilience Steering group engaged with an independent consultant to consult with stakeholders (schools and services) to identify and document the resilience programmes previously/currently delivered to 0-18 in the respective counties. With a focus on 0-18 year olds, the Resilience Steering Group also seek to also identify the barriers to engagement and any potential gaps in programme provision across the counties.

#### 4. Sligo and Leitrim combined demographic in brief

The following figures have been taken from the Census (2016) and show combined figures for Sligo and Leitrim.

##### Electoral Divisions:

- Sligo-Leitrim is a 4-seat joint government voting constituency.
- It comprises of the entire counties of Sligo and Leitrim and some Electoral Divisions (EDs) in counties Donegal and Cavan.

##### Population:

- The population of the constituency at the time of the 2016 Census was 113,920.
- In Sligo-Leitrim, 24.6% of population was aged under 18.
- Of the 113,920 people living in the constituency, 13,930 of these are aged between 15 and 24 years old. This equates to just over 8% of the combined population.

Tables 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3 Children and Young People by age in Sligo and Leitrim

**Table 3.1: Sligo and Leitrim – Summary population aged 16-24**

Indicator	Sligo	Leitrim	Combined
Population of young people aged 16-17	1781	876	2,657
Population of young people aged 18-24	2,691	2,678	5,369
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4,472</b>	<b>3,554</b>	<b>8,026</b>

Data source: CSO (Census 2016)

**Table 3.2: Sligo – Breakdown of ages, 16-24 year olds**

Age	Male	Female	Total
16	470	383	853
17	481	447	928
18	474	427	901
19	421	450	871
20-24	1796	1801	3597
<b>Totals</b>	<b>3,642</b>	<b>3,508</b>	<b>7150</b>

Data source: CSO (Census 2016)

**Table 3.3: Leitrim – Breakdown of ages, 16-24 year olds**

Age	Male	Female	Total
16	204	231	435
17	237	204	441
18	194	165	359
19	134	123	257
20-24	662	631	1,293
Totals	1,431	1,354	2,785

Data source: CSO (Census 2016)

### **Nationality, Ethnicity and Religion:**

- The nationality of those residing in Sligo Leitrim is 88.9% Irish, 3.6% British, 2.3% Polish, 0.5% Lithuanian, 1.8% other EU countries.
- White Irish is the most common ethnicity with 86% of the population stating this on the census. 0.6% of the population are from the travelling community, 0.6% of the population are black or black Irish, 1.3% are Asian or Asian Irish, 8.3% are from other white ethnic backgrounds that are not Irish.
- 81.8% of the population are Catholic. 8.2% of the population are from other religious background while 7.9% of the population have stated that they have no religion.

### **Labour Market, Employment and Unemployment.**

- From a labour force perspective, 49.8% of the population are at work with 0.8% of the population looking for a job and 7.6% were unemployed having lost or given up previous job.

### **Family units and structures**

- In Sligo-Leitrim, there are 29,189 family units.
- 13% of households had adolescent teenagers.
- 22.7% of families have 2 children and 27.22% of families have one child.
- 19,734 of these family units have children altogether and 14,771 (74.9%) of these families were couples with children. 11.8% of couples have children under and over 15. 25.7% of couples had children all over the age of 15.
- 4,963 (25.1%) were one parent families. 13% of one parent families had children all over the age of 15. 9.4% of one parent families had children under 15 only and 3% of one parent families has children under and over 15.

## Poverty

According to the POBAL HP Deprivation Indices (2016), both Sligo and Leitrim are under the national average in terms of wealth. The indices rate for the state is 0.6%.

- Sligo is marginally below the average at 1.6%, while Leitrim is -3.2% below. The poverty rates in the combined counties are higher than the national average.
- 23.7% of the population are 'at risk of poverty' (State 16.5%)
- 25.9% of the population suffer some form of deprivation (State 21%)
- 13.4% of the population are in 'consistent poverty' (State 8.3%).

These figures show that one in four people in the Sligo-Leitrim area are deprived in some way, one in four people are at risk of poverty and just over one in ten of the population are in consistent poverty. While the counties both have a worrying number of people at risk of or in poverty, those on the Live Register has been decreasing since 2018. This improvement has been seen more in Sligo, with 750 people less on the register between April 2018 and April 2021, in comparison to a 230 decrease in Leitrim.

The effects of poverty upon physical and mental health are noted in the literature review and these resulting factors noted are a key reason that prevention and early intervention models are so important. Having resilience is one of the ways to get through some of the challenges poverty and deprivation bring and with the possible downturn post the pandemic, these struggles may very well increase. It is for this reason resilience programmes, wellbeing programmes and general good health programmes are needed now more than ever.

## 5. Literature review

### What is resilience and why are resilience programmes needed?

The word resilience is often used to refer to our ability to 'get back up and go'. This simple explanation makes it sound like an achievable goal. Whether this is on an ability or capacity level challenge, some children and young people need extra support and guidance. It is for this reason the 5 National Outcomes are so important. They give each child a chance through a coordinated response to improve those outcomes.

The word resilience became widely used throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century by psychologists to describe a child's ability to deal with trauma. Early origins may relate to the Latin 're' meaning 'back' and the 'salient' meaning 'leap' or 'back leap'. In scientific terms, the term is used to describe a shapes/objects ability to return back to its current state. From a wellbeing position, one could say that our resilience is our ability to return back to our 'healthy state' after a trauma or negative experience occurred. However, this assumes our state prior to the event was 'healthy'. As we know, some children do not always get the chance to experience a 'healthy' state and while they may not be aware of this, it is important that this child receives guidance on what 'healthy' looks like through the supports they access or through school. Knowing what this 'healthy' state looks like is crucial if a child, young person or indeed an adult can maintain resilience. Other variations of the meaning include our ability to face a trauma or challenge head on, our ability to approach a troubling event calmly and critically and our ability to get back to normal life after an event. This ability, in some instances, needs to be taught and it is for this reason, interventions based on enhancing personal development are advised and seen right throughout policy and service delivery in Ireland. Programmes which seek to build resilience usually seek to improve the understanding of self, to increase confidence, self-esteem and self-worth, to develop healthy mind-sets and habits and to help the participant recognise the importance of positive relationships. When each of these components are in place, we are more likely to have the skills and the support that we need to overcome the challenges we face.

### Policy in Ireland

The recent and current drive to improve the wellbeing of Irelands children, young people and families can be seen right throughout our policy for the last decade and a half. From the early years to adulthood, frameworks have been developed to support children and young people to build resilience and increase overall wellbeing to ensure

better outcomes. The list below shows some of the relevant frameworks which seek to improve outcomes for children and young people through a focus on physical and mental wellbeing.

- Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework – 2009
- Get Active Physical Education: Physical Activity and Sport for Children and Young People: A Guideline Framework - 2012
- Sláintecare Report - 2011
- Healthy Ireland – 2013
- Well-Being in Post Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion – 2013
- Better, Outcomes, Brighter Futures – the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People - 2014-2020,
- Well-Being in Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion - 2015
- Framework for Junior Cycle - 2015
- Youthreach Soft Skills Framework – 2015
- Connecting for Life: Ireland’s National Strategy to Reduce Suicide - 2015-2020,
- The National Youth Strategy 2015-2020
- Looking at Our School: A Quality Framework for Primary Schools - 2016
- Looking at Our School: A Quality Framework for Post Primary Schools - 2016
- Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines - 2017
- A Whole School Guidance Framework - 2017
- Wellbeing Policy and Framework for Practice 2018-2023
- First Five - 2019,
- Sharing the Vision: A Mental Health Policy for Everyone - 2020

Where adverse effects are commonplace, prevention and early intervention driven by a coordinated response by government, is the only way to ensure better outcomes for children and young people. The importance of prevention and early Intervention approaches within the national infrastructure has been recognised by the Irish government as important and this in many ways progressed to where we are today because of the large investments by the government and the Atlantic Philanthropists over the past 2 decades. The existence of Atlantic Philanthropists in 2013 saw the government take the driving seat and in 2014 the then Department of Children and

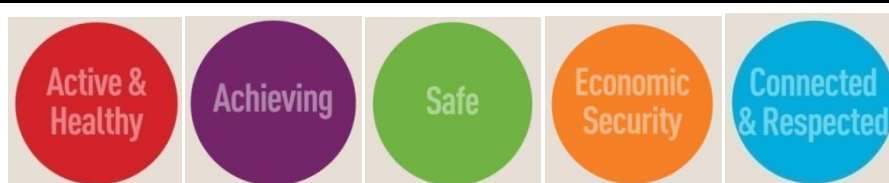
Youth Affairs released *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*, the National Framework for Children and Young People in Ireland 2014-2020.

A policy framework, the Departments vision was;

*‘Our vision is for Ireland to be one of the best small countries in the world in which to grow up and raise a family, and where the rights of all children and young people are respected, protected and fulfilled; where their voices are heard and where they are supported to realise their maximum potential now and in the future.’*

This framework set to improve 5 key outcomes for children and young people. These outcomes are;

Image 3.1 *Better Outcomes, Better Futures*: 5 National Outcomes



All work carried out with children and young people in Ireland seeks to improve these outcomes in some way. This shared vision has meant that Ireland now has a more targeted, consistent, coordinated response to prevention and early intervention at a local and national level. For children who experience adverse effects, fulfilling these outcomes could mean the difference between them becoming active members of society to them not being engaged at all.

As a result of this drive to improve outcomes through policy and preventative and early intervention approaches, most children in Ireland have access to wellbeing programmes whether this is in school or through the services they access in their community. The role of parents is not being overlooked by this national drive but rather more focused on involving and including parents where possible.

### **The need for resilience programmes**

The 2016 census found that 8.1% of children in Ireland live in consistent poverty. This appears to have increased according to findings from Social Justice Ireland (2021) annual report *Poverty Focus*. Social Justice Ireland (2021) found that 26.1% of all

children are in poverty in Ireland with 16.7% of school going children and students aged 16 and over in poverty. According to the Peter McVerry Trust (2021), 8,475 people were homeless in Ireland in September 2021. 3,333 of these were under the age of 24 years of age with 2,344 of these children (PMV Trust, 2021). The national Deprivation Indices average is 0.6% according to the POBAL HP Deprivation Indices (2016). Sligo is marginally below the average at 1.6% while Leitrim is -3.2 below. The poverty rates in the combined county are all greater than the national average with 23.7% of the combined population are 'at risk of poverty' (State 16.5%), 25.9% of the population suffer some form of deprivation (State 21%) and 13.4% of the population are in 'consistent poverty' (State 8.3%).

Since the global economic crash the mental health challenges amongst children and young people in Ireland is also on the incline. This may be a result of the rising levels of poverty, homelessness and deprivation. Between the years 2012-2016, CAMHS saw the request for mental health services rise by over 25%. In 2017, Jigsaw reported that 39% of its users experienced anxiety, 31% reported low mood, 25% reported issues with stress, 17% reported sleep disturbances, 15% said they had difficulties with anger, 14.5% had mental health issue due to family problems, 12% said they had low self-esteem and self-criticised, while a further 15% had suicidal thoughts (Jigsaw Annual Report, 2017). Recent research looking at hospital admissions to Emergency Departments during the first 12 months of the pandemic for 5-15 year olds shows a significant jump in admissions from 143(2019) admissions to 218(2020) admissions for the period of July to August, an increase of over 52% (McDonnell et al., 2021). The numbers for the following 4 months showed that 552 children and young people were admitted to hospital through Emergency Departments in 2020 during the months September to December, an increase of over 45% on the following year which saw 379 children and young people being admitted (McDonnell et al., 2021).

The effects of poverty, homelessness and other adverse experiences has been well researched and negative experiences during childhood have shown to decrease later life outcomes. The Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (ACE Study) is a longitudinal research study conducted by the U.S. health maintenance organization Kaiser Permanente and the Centre's for Disease Control and Prevention in the 1990's. The study has become world-renowned because it demonstrated a connection between adverse childhood experiences (ACE) and social and health problems across the lifespan. Since it began, the study has produced over 50 reports of findings and these



findings have been recognised throughout the world. One study from the National Survey of Children's Health in the USA reported that approximately 68% of children 0–17 years old had experienced one or more ACEs (Blodgett et al., 2018). According to WAVE Trust (2018) over 50% of the UK population have suffered some ACEs and around 15% have suffered 4 or more. Plumb et al. (2019) found that a child with 4 or more ACEs was 32 times more likely to be labelled with a behavioural or cognitive problem than a child with no ACEs.

The impact of poverty or deprivation can be very negative upon communities. Sligo and Leitrim are border counties and communities have experienced trauma as a direct result of that. The cross-border project MACE operates in Sligo and Leitrim and is one of the first projects in these counties to focus on decreasing the effects of Multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences (MACE) specifically. The project recognises the importance of providing universal, targeted and specialised supports to help the communities to become better aware of adversities and the potential issues that might arise due to experiencing adversity or trauma in childhood; to support parents and communities to build skills and to develop techniques to engage better with children and; to learn about what individuals can do to manage the negative impact of ACEs. A multi-agency and coordinated approach to ACE, the MACE project offers Sligo and Leitrim a resource which gives parents, children and young people access to programmes and specialist supports which they may not have had access to before.

How adversity negatively impacts a child's daily life and health across the lifespan is alarming and it is for this reason that early interventions designed to target such challenges are so important. Adverse effects during childhood can have a negative impact on later life physical and mental health (Gilman et al., 2002; Langenberg et al., 2006; Loukes et al., 2009; Copper and Stewart, 2013). It is also known that child poverty can have a significant effect on a child's schooling and school readiness (Waldfoegel and Washbrook, 2013; Wickham et al., 2016). Research suggests that child poverty may also be associated with differences in how the brain structurally develops. Hair et al., (2015) and Noble et al., (2015) found that child poverty influences the development of the areas of the brain concerned with language, executive functioning and memory. The knock-on effect of such developmental differences means that the individual may be behind his/her milestones very early on and this may have a lasting effect not only on schooling but on other elements of life too. The cost to the individual in this case could be detrimental in regard to their education, employment and

relationship outcomes. This could also have a knock-on effect on costs to the State. This is evidence enough to conclude that if early intervention approaches aimed at building resilience were offered to all children and young people through mainstream avenues such as school and services, there may be an opportunity to secure better outcomes for themselves in the future.

### **Resilience programmes: identifying evidence-based programmes being delivered nationally and internationally**

The importance of delivering evidence-based programmes that are evaluated regularly is recognised nationally and this awareness has been driven by the National Policy Framework *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures 2014 -2020*.

Upon deciding to commission this report, the CYPSC Active and Healthy Working Group developed a 'Tender Application Brief'. Within the brief, the working group described resilience programmes as;

- Programmes that develop young people's skills to build supportive networks and relationships, to recognise when they are struggling to seek help when they need it.
- Programmes that build on internal resources such as confidence, self-esteem and positive self-talk, so that children and young people recognise that by having support networks they are able to seek help from others. This is an important element of resilience.
- Programmes that focus on identifying feelings and how to express and self-regulate these feeling in a healthy manner.
- Fostering connection and healthy relationships is important in terms of resilience.

The tables below show some of the evidence-based programmes currently being delivered in Ireland to promote wellbeing. The programmes have shown to directly or indirectly build confidence, self-esteem and resilience and have shown to improve outcomes for children and young people aged 0-18 year olds.

Table 4.1 shows the programmes most commonly used within the early years educational setting and family support services in Ireland. Programmes at this young age, especially that from 0-3 are focused mainly at giving parents some of the knowledge and skills they need to parent a child positively despite their circumstances.

Research from the programmes shown below suggests that if a parent’s wellbeing and support network are strong, they will parent more positively resulting in a child meeting their developmental milestones. While programmes in these early years are not directly aimed at building resilience in the child, they are aimed at empowering parents by giving them some of the skills that they need to raise resilient children and young people. By learning about the development of a child, about the importance of play and communication, about the importance of social and emotional support, a parent is increasing their child’s life outcomes tenfold. Evidence exists that shows how parent focused interventions that are based on behavioural and social cognitive principles, which aim to improve parent-child relationships and strengthening parenting skills, have a massive effect on positive development (McGilloway,2012). Programmes which use this particular focus have been found to be effective when tackling challenging behaviours in childhood (Allen and Smith, 2008; Furlong, et al., 2012).

For most of the programmes shown below in the tables a licensing fee, a facilitator training fee and a programme resource fee must be paid to use the programme in a service or school. Appendix 1.2 shows the details for the programmes. This information is available online or through contacting the authors directly.

Table 4.1: Programme delivery through early years and family support settings for 0-5 year olds in Ireland

Age Group	Programme Name and Details
Pre-birth, baby and toddler	<p><b>‘Mellow’ Bumps, Mums, Dads, Baby, Toddler</b></p> <p><b>– Delivered through Early Years and Family Support Services ordinarily</b></p> <p>The ‘Mellow Bumps’ programme was the first of the groups catalogue of evidence-based programmes for parents and they have shown to have benefits for both parent and baby. Participant in the research stated that participation in the programme resulted in <i>‘powerful mechanisms of change, leading to stress reduction, included: relief through unburdening, empowerment through support given and received, reduced isolation through sharing anxieties, and control through self-care advice’</i> (Buston et al, 2019). Breustedt and Puckering</p>

	<p>(2013) identified several further strengths to the intervention including <i>"facilitator's provision of support, the social aspect of meeting other mothers-to-be, learning about infant development and practical strategies</i>. Barriers to engagement identified were negative preconceptions about antenatal support, fear of being judged and feeling pressured by services to participate.</p>
Pre-birth, baby	<p><b>The Incredible Years(IY) Baby Programme for Parent and Baby</b></p> <p><b>– Delivered through Early Years and Family Support Services ordinarily</b></p> <p>The IY Baby Programme is new to the series of IY which was first developed over 30 years ago. Like the rest of the series the emphasis remains the same but it places an extra focus on the development phase of 0-3. Incredible Babies Programme offers parents take-home literature to help them understand development in the first year. Parents first come with their baby. With babies, parents attend sessions for 10-12 weeks and it is advised that parents are engaged in the programme prior to birth so they can start once the baby is born. Sessions in this programme include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Getting to know baby (0-3months)</li> <li>- Babies as intelligent Learners (3-6 months)</li> <li>- Providing physical, tactile and visual stimulation.</li> <li>- Parents learning to read babies minds</li> <li>- Getting support</li> <li>- Babies engaging sense of self (6-12 months)</li> </ul> <p>A small pilot study conducted in Wales has shown positive feedback from families and would suggest its potential to be a cost-effective intervention (Jones et al., 2012)</p>
Toddler	<p><b>The IY Toddler Programme for Parents of Toddlers.</b></p> <p><b>– Delivered through Early Years and Family Support Services ordinarily</b></p>

	<p>The programme lasts up to 12 weeks and it is for parents only. The focus of the IY Toddler Programme is on several key areas;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Child directed play to enhance relationships</li> <li>- Promoting toddler language and child directed coaching</li> <li>- Social and emotional coaching</li> <li>- Praise and encouragement</li> <li>- Spontaneous incentives for toddlers</li> <li>- Handling separations and reunions</li> <li>- Positive discipline (effective limit setting / handling misbehaving)</li> </ul> <p>Gross et al. (2003) found that parents who participated in the programme showed to have higher efficacy and used less coercive discipline and more positive parenting overall. Children in the study showed reductions in behaviour problems with most effects for both lasting after 1 year. Perrin et al. (2014) tested efficacy of the programme in 11 diverse, primary care rural and urban paediatric practices. Parents in the study were selected by the level of risk at clinical level their child had in regards to behavioural problems. Results showed reductions in negative parenting and child misbehaviours which has sustained after 1 year Perrin et al. (2014).</p>
Aged 1-6 years	<p><b>Parents Plus Early Years Programme for Parents</b></p> <p><b>– Delivered through Early Years and Family Support Services ordinarily</b></p> <p>Parents Plus Early Years programme is practical, solution-focused and draws on parents’ strengths. It is suitable for parents of children aged 1 to 6 years, including young children with additional needs. It is flexible and can be delivered over 6-12 weeks in small groups or with individuals. Studies carried out by the research team at Parents Plus in preschool, mental health and early intervention settings have shown that families who complete the Parents Plus Early Years programme report increased child positive social behaviour, increased school readiness, reduced emotional problems, decreased parental stress, increased parental confidence.</p>

<p>Programme 1 – Healthy Ireland Smart Start (Birth-3 years age group and Programme 2 – Healthy Ireland Smart Start – Preschool</p>	<p><b>Healthy Ireland Smart Start Programmes (HISS)</b></p> <p><b>-Delivered through Early Years and Care services which include sessional and part-time pre-school, crèche and childminding settings</b></p> <p>The Smart Start Programme is a result of 10 years of collaboration between the HSE and The National Childhood Network. The aim of this programme according to the National Childhood Network is to support children’s development of lifelong healthy lifestyle patterns, Skills, behaviours and attitudes. Both programmes are of 11 hours’ duration and are delivered by experienced and trained trainers who are informed and guided by staff from HSE Health and Wellbeing and the National Childhood Network. The programme has 5 modules.</p> <p>They include health promotion, nurturing emotional wellbeing, physical activity through play, nutrition and oral health.</p> <p>The HISS preschool programme has been delivered across each of the 26 counties since 2014. The new Birth – 3 years HISS programme was developed in 2019 – 2020 and piloted in 29 services across a number of counties in Ireland with great success.</p> <p>A consultation with parents using services who participated in the first HISS programme was carried out in 2015 and external review of the programme and the policy context was carried out in 2019.</p>
<p>Birth to aged 5</p>	<p><b>Lifestart Foundation – ‘The Growing Child’</b></p> <p><b>-Delivered by a trained ‘family visitor’ in the home</b></p> <p>The Lifestart Foundation is an all-Ireland charitable body who offer an evidence-based programme for parents of children from birth up to aged 5 years. Their core programme ‘The Growing Child’ is delivered to parents in the home on a monthly basis. According to the Lifestart Foundation website (2021) the programme has been proven to reduce parental stress; strengthen the relationships between parent and child; and support parents in understanding how their child develops</p>

and learns. Melhuish (2015) states that *Out of the range of good quality parenting programmes available, the Lifestart programme is highly cost effective and for a structured evidence-based programme, is sufficiently flexible at the point of delivery to allow for adaptation in response to need.* Lifestart's 'The Growing Child' is tailored to suit each individual child and family. The parent is provided with age specific information on a monthly basis with a visit from the 'family visitor'. The programme focuses on several areas including speech and language, problem solving and preparing for school.

Table 4.2 shows programmes designed for working with the child, the parent and in some cases schools. The Incredible Years programmes have been delivered in Ireland since 2004 and have shown very good results. According to NICE (2007), The Incredible Years Basic Parenting Programme (IYBP) is considered a model-parenting programme. The implementation of the programme in Ireland began in 2004 within several community-based agencies and schools. Initiated by Archway, the national coordinator of the IY programme in Ireland, the initiative aimed to target parents and children from at risk backgrounds and disadvantaged areas. In 2012, McGilloway and colleagues conducted research to explore the long-term outcomes of IY with the targeted group across Ireland. The study found very positive outcomes for both parents and children. McGilloway et al. (2012) found that the programme reduced conduct disorder behaviours, hyperactivity type behaviours, problem sibling relationships, negative peer relations, and long-term improvements in child social adjustment. Programmes such as Parents Plus and Strengthening Families have also shown to be effective in building resilience and confidence in children. The FRIENDS series are used in Ireland in youth services and educational settings.

Table 4.2: Programmes delivered through Services and Educational Settings 6-12 year olds in Ireland

Age Group	Programme Name and Details
0-12 year olds	The Incredible Years - Child, Parent and Teachers Series

	<p><b>– Can be delivered in Family Support settings, early education settings and schools</b></p> <p>The Webster-Stratton Incredible Years (IY) Parent, Teacher, and Child Training Series was designed in the 1990s as a preventative tool to decrease conduct disorders in childhood. The programme is designed specifically for 0-12 year olds, parents and teachers and it emphasises a 'whole' approach. In 2012, McGilloway et al (2012) explored the long-term outcomes of IY in Ireland. The study found very positive outcomes for both parents and children. McGilloway et al. (2012) found that the programme reduced conduct disorder behaviours, hyperactivity type behaviours, problem sibling relationships, negative peer relations, and long-term improvements in child social adjustment. Overall, the findings suggest a robust effect of the intervention indicating that the IYBP programme is likely to result in longer-term reductions in problematic child behaviours, such as aggressive, externalising, hyperactive and oppositional/non-compliant behaviours (McGilloway et al., 2012). The intervention also had a significant positive effect on parental wellbeing and psychosocial functioning in the longer term, according to McGilloway et al. (2012). At the 12-month follow-up, parents reported lower levels of stress and psychological distress indicating possible sustained benefits with respect to parental psychosocial functioning (McGilloway, 2012).</p>
6-11 year olds	<p><b>Parents Plus Children's Programme</b></p> <p><b>-Can be delivered in Family Support settings, school settings and youth services</b></p> <p>Parents Plus Children Programme is a solution focused, practical programme that draws on parents' strengths. It is delivered to parents of children aged 6-11 years, including children with additional needs. The programme is flexible and can be delivered to small groups or one to one over a 6-12-week period. Studies have been carried out by Parents Plus in several settings including primary schools, mental health, and disability service settings. Parents in the</p>



	<p>studies reported increased positive social behaviour, reduced problem behaviours, and reduced emotional problems in their child. Parents themselves reported decrease parental stress and increased parental confidence (<a href="https://www.parentsplus.ie/parents-plus-programmes/childrens-programme/">https://www.parentsplus.ie/parents-plus-programmes/childrens-programme/</a>).</p>
<p><b>Programmes for children aged 3-7, aged 8-11, aged 12-16 and adults programme.</b></p>	<p><b>The Friends Programme</b></p> <p>– <b>Delivered in youth services and schools ordinarily</b></p> <p>The programme was developed in Australia for children and young people as a tool to reduce anxiety and promote emotional resilience. It is an early intervention and prevention programme with a focus on anxiety and depression. It is based on the theory of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). The programme is skills based and delivered in group settings. It includes 4 different programmes for the different age groups including an adult's programme. The programme has found to have significant positive effects on anxiety and depression as well as improving participants self-concept, social skills and coping skills (Lowrey-Webster et al., 2001; Farrell et al, 2005; Iizuka et al., 2015).</p> <p><b>The FUN FRIENDS Programme (early education to school transition)</b></p> <p>This programme is for young children and the curriculum helps build the social and emotional skills of young children by using fun, play-based group activities. The idea behind this programme is that if we can learn resilience early on, children will build confidence to facilitate a smooth transition into school life.</p> <p><b>FRIENDS for Life Programme (child to adolescent transition)</b></p> <p>FRIENDS for Life programme is recognised by the World Health Organisation as an effective tool in preventing anxiety in children. A social skills and resilience curriculum, it is proven to reduce anxiety and provide participants with strategies to face the challenges they face in life. According to the developers, the programme also</p>

improves social and emotional skills, the ability to focus, confidence, capacity to relax ability to regulate emotions and increased empathy.

In Ireland, positive wellbeing is increasingly becoming more intertwined within a school's ethos. The WEAVER Wellbeing programme is one way that schools are embedding the focus of positive wellbeing into the school fabric. Other programmes used in schools to build resilience and confidence in school aged children are shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Programmes delivered through Primary Schools in Ireland

Age Group	Programme Name and Details
Primary aged children	<p><b>The Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management (TCM) Programme</b></p> <p><b>The IY TCM programme is a classroom-based intervention.</b></p> <p>This has been designed to reduce conduct problems and promote children's pro-social behaviour by strengthening classroom management strategies. Research carried out by Archways and the National University of Ireland, Maynooth points toward the overall utility and cost-effectiveness of the IY TCM programme in an Irish context. The programme led to improvements in the classroom environment. This included a reduction in teacher reported stress and negative classroom management strategies, as well as fewer instances of disruptive behaviour among pupils in the classroom. All NEPS psychologists are trained to deliver the Classroom Management Programmes training to teachers.</p>
Aged 5-8	<p><b>The Zippy's Friends Programme</b></p> <p>The Zippy's Friends Programme has been designed to promote the emotional well-being of children by increasing their coping skills and by</p>

	<p>stimulating varied and flexible ways of coping with problems of day-to-day life. Supporting the work of the Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum for junior classes, the programme has 6 modules. The programme addresses feelings, communication, making and breaking relationships, conflict resolution, dealing with change and loss, and general coping skills. Supported by a teacher's manual and teaching materials, which are designed to actively engage the children in a range of child-cantered activities, teachers participate in a structured training programme with the support of the Department of Education and Science and the Health Service Executive before implementing the programme in class. Clarke and Barry's (2010) evaluation of the programme found the greatest results with children's emotional literacy with significant improvements in the children's self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills when compared to the control group. Teachers in the study (over 90%) observed improvements in the children's social skills, verbal communication skills, their ability to manage their feelings and their relationships with one another. Children who participated showed to have greater verbal literacy in regard to being able to name and explain their emotions and feelings.</p>
<b>Aged 3-7 and aged 8-11</b>	<p><b>The Friends Programme</b></p> <p>The FRIENDS programme is being delivered through post primary schools more so than primary schools in Ireland currently. The results of the programme are promising with all age groups and have shown to have positive effects on children and young people. In one meta-analytic study examining efficacy of programmes targeting the prevention of child and adolescent anxiety, Fisak et al. (2011) found that the studies using the FRIENDS programme demonstrated significantly stronger effects than other programmes not using FRIENDS.</p> <p>See above Table for more details on programmes from the FRIENDS Hub for primary age children.</p>

The transition from primary to secondary school can be a very challenging time for young people. For some young people the support they once got in primary school may not exist in secondary school. For others, they may be entering a school where they do not know anyone. The increase in workload, the increase in student numbers, the classroom changes and school timetables, and the newness of everything can be very overwhelming. With this dramatic change, young people also have to navigate puberty, new types of social demands, new types of relationships including intimate ones and a second transition from childhood to adulthood, all in the space of 6 years. The global pandemic has added to these stresses and now more than ever, children and young people need specialist attention and specialist support. Programming is one way of doing this. Whether it is through universal or targeted approaches, building resilience during the age of 12-18 is crucial if a young person is to progress to adulthood positively. Table 4.4 and 4.5 show programmes delivered on a national level to 12-18 year olds through schools and services.

Table 4.4: Programmes delivered through Services and Post Primary Schools for 12-18 year olds in Ireland

Age	Programme Name and Details
Programme can be adapted to many age ranges including 3-5 years, 6-11 years, 10-14 years, 12-16 years	<p><b>Strengthening Families Programme (SFP)</b></p> <p><b>-This programme is used mostly with the 12-16-year-old young person in Ireland and facilitated in a service setting</b></p> <p>The SFP was developed in America in the early 1980s. Over the years the programme has been adapted and can now be used with a wide range of participants including both young children and adolescents. The programmes can be short or long, with versions running from 7 to 14 weeks. It is an evidence-based family skills training programme that involves the parents and children/young people. All take 3 classes together, on the same night once a week. Families enjoy a meal on arrival which they sometimes make together, then parents and teens /children engage in separate skills-based sessions for 1 hour. This is followed by a family skills session in the second hour, where skills are practiced amongst families.</p>

	<p>The programme is designed to reduce multiple risk factors including mental health problems. It seeks to build on the family strengths, increasing the child/young person's social competencies and improving positive parenting skills. The programme was first introduced in Ireland in 2007 in Co Cork. Research from Kumper and O Driscoll (2012) cited that SFP for 12–16-year-olds was effective in reducing behavioural health problems in Irish adolescents, improving family relationships, and reducing substance abuse. The research also found that there was a significant change in the parents and in the family environment demonstrating improved family resilience. Significant changes in the child's concentration and covert behaviours were also seen (KUMPER AND O Driscoll, 2012).</p>
For parents of adolescents	<p><b>Parents Plus Adolescent's Programme</b></p> <p><b>This programme can be delivered in a range of settings informally or as part of a formal structured plan.</b></p> <p>This programme is a solution focused training based on evidence that supports parents parenting adolescents. It seeks to equip parents with the tools they need to build positive relationships with their young person, support their emotional wellbeing and to help them to raise 'confident, well-adjusted adults' (<a href="http://www.parentsplue.ie">www.parentsplue.ie</a>). Research carried out by the authors in secondary schools and in mental health setting with families who completed the programme showed that the programme increases positive social behaviour, reduced behavioural and emotional problems, decreases parental stress, improves family communication and increases parents' confidence (<a href="http://www.parentsplue.ie">www.parentsplue.ie</a>).</p>
Secondary aged young people	<p><b>The Decider Programme</b></p> <p><b>This programme can be delivered in a range of settings including home, educational, workplace, social and health settings informally or as part of a formal structured plan.</b></p> <p>The Decider Programme was developed in the UK and has been adopted by the HSE as a tool to promote wellbeing amongst young</p>

<p>Primary and secondary</p>	<p>people in Ireland. It is grounded in theory summarising 32 evidence-based skills to assist when dealing with complex emotions and situations based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Skills (CBT) and Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (DBT) theory. The skills explored will help participants be more resilience, resourceful, robust, and reflective according to the authors. This evidence-based programme has shown to produce many benefits for the participant. These include an increased ability to manage emotions and own mental health; improved emotional intelligence, developed, and strengthen new neural pathways; more skilful, less impulsive life; increase mind-body connection; and a shared common language that promotes positive mental wellbeing (<a href="https://www.thedecider.org">https://www.thedecider.org</a>).</p> <p>The authors of the Decider programme have also developed 'Good2Go', a whole school approach to building resilience and independence amongst its students. Innovative in its approach, young people deliver this programme to primary aged children via video link.</p> <p>The Decider Programme is approved by the British Psychological Society.</p>
<p>12-16 year olds</p>	<p><b>My Friends Youth Programme (see notes above also)</b></p> <p><b>-Can be delivered in a group setting through schools or services</b></p> <p>Another of the FRIENDS series, this programme teaches skills and practical knowledge to help navigate secondary school. It is a skills-based programme which teaches young people coping skills and resilience to help them to transition into adulthood more easily. According to the authors, My Friends Youth Programme has been proven to decrease anxiety and depression (<a href="https://friendsresilience.org/myfriendsyouth">https://friendsresilience.org/myfriendsyouth</a>). It also helps young people to build positive relationships through confidence, self-esteem, and positive communication. The programme is similar to the other FRIENDS programmes in that it has 5 sessions facilitated by a trained and certified individual.</p>

Table 4.5: Youth Services and Charities self-published programmes for 12-18 year olds

Youth Service	Programme Name and Details
Foróige	<p><b>‘Be Healthy, Be Happy’</b></p> <p><b>This programme is aimed at 12-18 year olds.</b></p> <p>The design of the programme is based on well-known theories and principles of youth work as well as theories such as Maslow’s (1943) Hierarchy of Needs, The Four Dimensions of Health (O’Toole and Kropf, 2010) and the Health Belief Model (Rosenstock, 1966 and Becker, 1974). The aim of the programme is <i>‘to enable young people to take charge of their health and wellbeing so as to enhance the quality of their lives by developing strengths and assets in areas of physical, mental, social and spiritual health’</i> (www.foroige.ie).</p> <p><b>‘Real U’</b></p> <p><b>This programme is a personal development programme aimed at 12-18 and is delivered in an informal group setting. It can also be adapted to be used one to one.</b></p> <p>Foróige worked closely with several other agencies to develop the programme. These include The Rape Crisis Centre, The Marie Keating Foundation, the HSE Crisis Pregnancy Programme and Belong To. The programme aims to <i>‘equip young people with the skills, knowledge and confidence to develop healthy relationships and to make responsible decisions in relation to their sexual health’</i> (www.foroige.ie).</p>
Youth Work Ireland	<p><b>‘Be Well’</b></p> <p><b>This programme is aimed at 12-18 and can be delivered in a range of settings.</b></p>

	<p>The Be Well programme is a support pack for young people to identify anxiety and address it. The programme seeks <i>‘to support young people to gain knowledge and skills to identify and address anxiety in their lives’</i> (<a href="http://www.youthworkireland.ie">www.youthworkireland.ie</a>).</p>
Jigsaw Headstrong	<p><b>‘School Transition Tool kits’</b></p> <p><b>For young people transitioning from primary to secondary school.</b></p> <p>This toolkit offers primary schools a resource to target challenges which may occur around school transitioning. It focuses on 4 areas. These include exploring attitudes and feelings about change, preparing for change, strategies to support mental health, and identifying and accessing supports. This programme is supported by Rethink Ireland and the Department of Rural and Community Development (via the Dormant Accounts Fund).</p> <p><b>‘Youth Mental Health Toolkits for Schools’</b></p> <p>The toolkit offers schools a resource to support school staff to build mental health literacy amongst their students, supporting them to manage their mental health and to assist them to develop skills which help them to seek help if they need it. The programme has 5 sections. These include exploring mental health and wellbeing, supports and challenges to our mental health, mental health, and wellbeing in school, managing feelings, and help seeking and being hopeful for the future.</p>
Aware	<p><b>‘Life Skills for School’</b></p> <p>This programme is offered to 15-18 year olds in secondary school. The programme is run over 4 weeks in schools and has been designed to help young people <i>‘learn new ways to</i></p>



	<i>deal with the challenges of life’ (<a href="http://www.aware.ie">www.aware.ie</a>). According to its authors the programme will help students to understand the interaction between thoughts, feelings, and behaviour, recognise unhelpful thinking styles and learn how these can be changes, build confidence and become a more positive thinker, learn how to manage anger better and irritability and identify unhelpful behaviours and learn to make small but practical changes.</i>
<b>Pieta House</b>	<b>‘Resilience Academy’</b>  This programme is aimed at secondary school aged young people. It is a skills-based programme with an aim to ‘increase protective factors such as coping skills, problem solving, decision making and cognitive skills’ ( <a href="http://www.pieta.ie">www.pieta.ie</a> ).

The Decider training has been offered to services and schools working with children and young people in Sligo and Leitrim. Currently, a large number of staff in the county have been fully trained in this programme. There is little knowledge in the public forum which shows how it is working in the county thus far but research carried out by the authors of the programme shows that it can improve wellbeing and resilience overall. Another programme that many staff in the county are trained in is Triple P Positive Parenting Programme. The training was funded by the Health Service Executive (HSE) as a result of a proposal submitted to them by a Sligo Leitrim CYPSC Working Group. Triple P is a programme for parents with children aged 2-10 years. The programme is both theoretical and practical and parents have the opportunity to learn as a group with other parents and then to test out what they have learned at home with the support of the facilitator. The programme supports parents to deal with and manage challenging behaviours. It aims to give parents the skills to help their child to develop problem solving skills, confidence, and resilience. This programme is now offered right throughout Sligo and Leitrim to parents over a 7-week course.

As Sligo and Leitrim are border counties this comes with a different set of challenges for services in regard to building and maintaining positive mental health. One initiative currently in delivery in the border counties which seeks to bring communities together

to halt the intergenerational impact of trauma and to build emotional resilience and peace for future generations is the 'OUR Generation Project'. The initiative involves services in communities, north and south of the border. These include Youth Work Ireland, the Donegal Youth Service (Youth Work Ireland), Action Mental Health, Youth Action Northern Ireland, Playboard Northern Ireland, Co-operation Ireland and Ulster University. The table below shows some of the programmes being delivered in the border counties as part of the initiative and the table also shows the counties, they are being delivered in.

**Table 4.6: Our Generation delivery of well-being programmes across boarder counties and Northern Ireland**

Organisation	Programmes	Counties of delivery
Youth Work Ireland	<p>'Be Well' (Available to young people 12-25 year olds)</p> <p>'YES' Programme (Available to schools and youth groups working with aged 5-11 year olds)</p> <p>'The Social Action' Project (Available to schools and youth groups working with aged 12-24 year olds)</p>	Cavan, Monaghan, Sligo, Leitrim, Donegal
Donegal Youth Service	<p>'The Peer Mentoring Programme' (Available to young people 12-25 year olds)</p> <p>Action Mental Health 'Healthy Me' (Available to schools and youth services working with 5-11 year olds)</p> <p>Action Mental Health 'Provoking Thought' (Available to schools and youth services working with 12-24 year olds)</p>	Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan and Monaghan

Action Mental Health	<p>'Healthy Me' (Available to schools and youth services working with 5-11 year olds)</p> <p>'Provoking Thought' (Available to schools and youth services working with 12-24 year olds)</p>	'Urban Village' areas and Border region
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With the growing concern of mental health problems amongst children and young people, having additional resources is an asset to the counties. The MACE project, as noted earlier, is another cross-border initiative that supports children, young people and families to deal with adversity in a positive way. The Co-operation and Working Together (CAWT) is a cross-border health and social care partnership comprising of the HSE (Republic of Ireland), the Southern and Western Health and Social Care Trusts, the Health and Social Care Board and the Public Health Agency in Northern Ireland. MACE is a result of the coming together of CAWT and TUSLA, the Child and Family Agency of the Republic of Ireland, whose roles are to improve the wellbeing and outcomes for children and young people. The project is funded by the European Union INTERREG VA programme.

Below in Table 4.7, several resilience programmes being delivered internationally are presented. Two particular programmes/resources show the greatest efficacy in regard to improving wellbeing. These include the UK developed 'iheart' programme and the 'BITE BACK' Australian developed online resource tool for young people. The 'iheart' programme in particular is innovative in its thinking in that instead of stating that their programmes help develop and build resilience, they state that resilience is already in us naturally. The programme helps us to access this resilience by learning more about ourselves. Essentially a strengths-based idea, this programme has shown good results. Trainers are equipped with the necessary skills to monitor and evaluate the programme and supported throughout to become a better facilitator. BITE BACK is completely free and can be used in any setting as long as the participant has access to a device and the internet. It gives the young person an opportunity to really learn about themselves using mental health challenges and personality tests.

Table 4.7: Resilience building tools and evidence-based resilience programmes for 0-18 year olds delivered internationally

Programme name, background, age profile and delivery options
<p><b><u>Early years and young children</u></b></p> <p>‘Resilience Alphabet’ was developed by Martha Simpson and illustrated by Phil Wong in the UK. The tool is a free to access online tool and has been developed to support children to build inner strength and resilience. The programme is supported by Aberdeen County Council and Education Scotland. This tool can be used in any setting including services, schools, and home settings.</p> <p>‘Ignite Inspire’ was founded by experts in the field of mental health and social work in the UK. They develop programmes for children and young people (group and one to one) that help to increase wellbeing and mental health. For younger children, they have developed 8 books for parents/carers to read to children which can support young children to understand their own mental health and wellbeing. The book series is called ‘Positive Parrot and Negative Newt’ and is advised to be used with young children in the home setting.</p> <p>‘RESCUR Surfing the Waves’ is a resilience programme for early years and primary schools which was developed by 6 European universities including The University of Malta, The University of Zagreb, The University of Crete, The University of Lisbon and Stockholm University. The programme has been built to empower vulnerable children at risk of early school leaving, absenteeism, disengagement, bullying, social inclusion and marginalisation. The programme consists of a Teacher’s Guide, a Parent’s Guide and manuals for the early years and early and late primary school years, and it comes in 7 languages.</p>
<p><b><u>Age 0-12:</u></b></p> <p><b>‘Beyond Blue Building Resilience in Children Aged 0-12: A practice Guide’-</b> Beyond Blue is an Australian mental health organisation and they developed this practice guide in response to Australia’s National Mental Health Commissions Review which identified a gap in prevention and early intervention tools. The Practice Guide assists practitioners to promote resilience and to build strategies around resilience. The</p>

programme can be offered in a range of settings including early childhood education and care settings, primary schools, welfare and community health and mental health settings.

#### Age 6-12:

‘Bounce Back’ is an award-winning positive education approach to wellbeing, resilience and social-emotional learning. Developed by Australian educators, psychologists, and bestselling authors. The programme is a whole school approach for all classes at primary level. ‘Bounce Back’ has been adapted by the Welsh government and is also been used throughout Wales. The programme provides strategies to improve student wellbeing and help students to cope with the complexities they face in everyday life. Through working on the programmes with trained facilitator students learn the skills to ‘bounce back’ when they experience sadness, difficulties, frustrations, and challenging times. ‘Bounce Back was the first ‘positive education programme in the world and has won several awards including the ‘Beat Teacher Resource’ by the Australian Educational Publisher and ‘Best Applied Community Psychology Project’ by the Australian Psychological Society. According to McGrath (2000), the Bounce Back programme appears to be an effective and user-friendly classroom programme for teaching students the strategies for coping with negative events in their lives while also having a positive effect on the teachers own coping skills. Research carried out by Axford and Blyth (2008) to explore the impact of Bounce Back on connectedness, found some positive results following implementation of Bounce Back. These included a 12% increase in pupils reporting that children in their class were being kind toward them and a 7% decrease in pupils reporting that children in their class felt left out and lonely. It is important to note that there is very limited evidence for this programme that could be found so while it has won several awards and it used throughout Wales and Australia, it is very difficult to show its true efficacy.

#### Age 9-12 and 13-18:

‘iheart’ is a registered UK charity that supports young people, parents, schools, and educators. The charity provides a range of specialised, evidence-based courses and programme on mental health education, resilience and wellbeing. What makes these

programmes different to others is the philosophy of the authors. The authors believe we have an innate resilience and positive wellbeing and that we already have the tools inside us to deal with the adversities of life. The programmes help us to remember these skills and use them to navigate the world around us. iheart have a range of programmes for school and home settings. These include 'Resilient School' programmes for 9-12 year olds and 13-18 year olds and Teacher/Staff Training programmes, and 'Resilient Families' programmes for young people and parents. The evidence for iheart is very strong. Based on data collected anonymously pre and post the programme delivery, 98% of children noticed a positive change in themselves at the end of the iheart programme; 90% saw an increase in emotional resilience in regard to dealing with adversity; 95% of young people would recommend the programme to a friend; in school life, a 59% decrease in the amount of days lost through exclusion and a 55% decrease for schools in fixed term exclusions ([www.iheartprinciples.com](http://www.iheartprinciples.com)). iheart is a promising new intervention offering a step-by-step change in mental health education for improving resilience, mental wellbeing, and the ability for children to navigate psychological challenges (Journal of Public Mental Health (2021)). From a brief review of the use of this programme in Ireland, only one arts organisation appears to be utilising this resource even though it is showing very promising results.

### **Age 13-16:**

BITE BACK was developed by the Black Dog Institute in Australia. It is a self-guided online wellbeing and resilience programme for young people aged 13-16. The Institute has been carrying out research trials and has found some very promising results thus far. The programme has shown to decrease symptoms of depression and anxiety while increasing wellbeing. The results of the study have showed that by using BITE BACK, particularly if use was for 30 minutes or more a week, there is a decrease in psychopathology and an increase in wellbeing for young people ([www.biteback.org.au](http://www.biteback.org.au)).

### **Primary and Secondary / Group and Individual options**

'Inspire Ignite' is a company in the UK who develop mental health and wellbeing programmes that aim to support children and young people to reach their full potential. They have a range of programmes tailored to different settings and age groups. The school programmes include a programme for primary, secondary, 6<sup>th</sup>

Form and Further Education as well as a programme specifically for Young People leaving care.

Primary School Programmes include 'Me, myself and I Primary Programme' – The 8-book series 'Positive Parrot and Negative Newt' is an integral part of this programme and they have a programme specifically for Year 5 and Year 6 (roughly aged 9-11/or the last 2 years of primary school) which looks at the transition to secondary school and supporting the young person to build the strength and resilience to transition smoothly.

Secondary School Programmes include 'Me, myself and I Secondary Programme' and 'The Thriving in Education Passport Programme' which seeks to give young people the tools to deal with exam pressure.

### **Population approach to Resilience**

The Boost Project is a new approach currently in development stages and has been funded by the European Union Horizon 2020 fund. This programme is being developed by several European countries including Norway, Poland, Spain and Belgium. The BOOST project will create a holistic population-based approach to promote mental well-being in primary school children by integrating effective components of the already-existing Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs, whose aim is to boost mental wellbeing and resilience, into an approach targeting teachers' pedagogical skills ([www.theboostproject.eu](http://www.theboostproject.eu)).

Globally, the push appears to be towards a school based or population/community-based approach to building resilience in children and young people. More universal than targeted, this approach may show better results when engaging the harder to reach young person or those young people who are seldom heard. Focusing on a whole population may make initiatives less intrusive or threatening, especially for those who may have had negative experiences with services or school in the past. A population approach can focus on a whole community but can be used as a tool to identify those who need greater support. They are an opportunity to build relationships with families and to enhance connections between the services and schools who facilitate them. Having targeted and specialised supports available and running alongside universal supports, like that seen in the MACE project, appears to show the greatest results

when improving outcomes for children and young people. While it is widely understood that not every child has the same social or economic opportunities, the level of need as a result of such a gap cannot be underestimated. The work that needs to occur going forward post pandemic to ensure that each child and young person, regardless of background, has the opportunity to meet their full potential, is extensive.

As a country we recognise the need for a coordinated response and while statistics show a frightening number of children and young people suffering from mental health problems and increased poverty and homelessness, this recognition has given us the chance to establish an infrastructure of support delivering evidence-based programmes at both a targeted and a universal level. During the last decade in particular, Ireland has been driven by early intervention practices. While we could not predict what would occur in 2020, we now have a body of resources, tried and tested, ready for use with children, young people and families in Ireland. This includes the Incredible Years, Parents Plus, Strengthening Families and the FRIENDS programmes. The findings from this research show that Sligo and Leitrim have a wide range of resources available to them, some of which already have a large portion of staff trained. With the addition of the MACE project and 'Our Generation', the counties are well equipped with tools going forward.



## 6. Research Findings

### Survey participants and service information

In all, 29 completed surveys were returned. This included respondents from;

- 18 individual services
- 5 primary schools
- 3 secondary schools
- 1 college.

Chart 6.1: Percentage of participating services and schools from Sligo and Leitrim

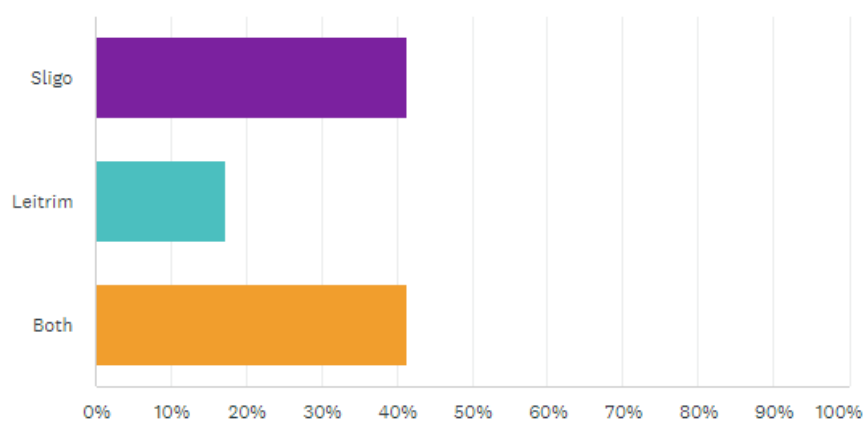
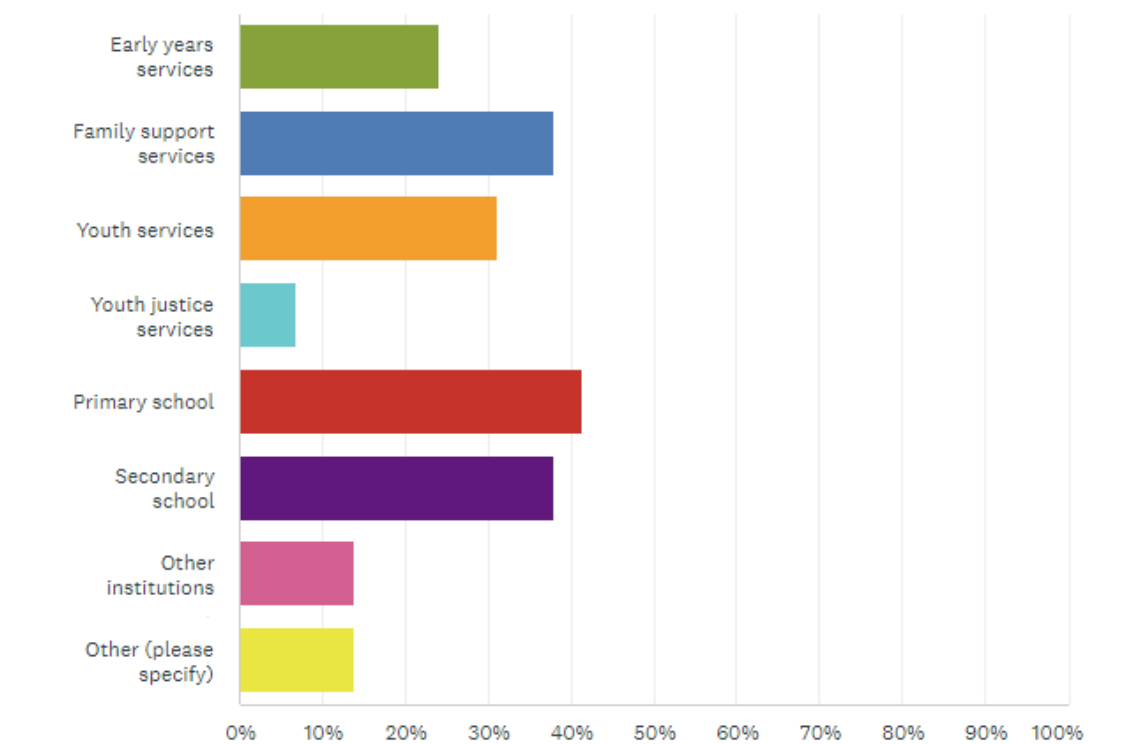
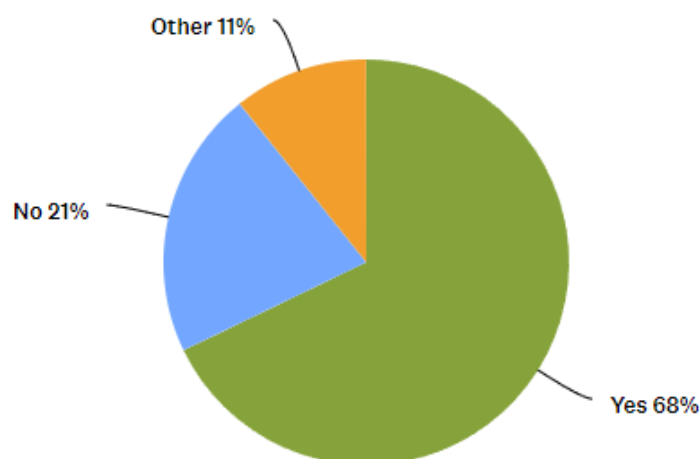


Chart 6.2: Survey participant areas of work/expertise



*How many of these services/schools deliver resilience programmes?*



68% of services and schools deliver resilience specific programmes. The remaining offer and delivered wellbeing programmes and positive mental health programmes.

*“Presently, partly due to Covid-19 restrictions, most of the young people we work with are struggling with social anxiety”.*

Stakeholder Statement

Table 6.1 shows the breakdown of services by county. The role of the survey participant is also added. Services included youth work service; family support services; community-based services; alcohol and substance misuse services; youth justice services, social work services, services for the Travelling and Roma communities, disability services and LGBTI services. Table 6.2 shows the number of educational institutions that participated. These include primary schools, secondary schools, and further education institutions.

Table 6.1: Participant Service, role, and operation profile

County	Service and role
Sligo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sligo Springboard Family Support Service- Assistant Project Manager</li> <li>• Tubbercurry Family and Childcare Resource Centre - Project Coordinator/Manager</li> <li>• Tubbercurry Family Resource Centre - Development Worker</li> <li>• Co. Sligo LEADER Partnership CLG. - SICAP Community Development Officer</li> <li>• Sligo Traveller Support Group - Primary Health Care Worker</li> <li>• Sligo Rape Crisis Centre - CEO</li> </ul>
Leitrim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children's Disability Network Team - Community Facilitator for Disability</li> <li>• Leitrim County Childcare Committee - Support &amp; Development Worker</li> </ul>
Both	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• M-PACT (Moving Parents and Children Together) Programme – Service Lead</li> <li>• Youth Work Ireland North Connaught - Youth Action Project - Youth Justice Worker / Smily L.G.B.T.+ Youth Project - Youth Worker / Regional Director</li> <li>• HSE Alcohol &amp; Substance Misuse Counselling Service</li> <li>• Foróige –Project Leader</li> <li>• Home Youth Liaison Service - Youth Support Worker attached to Social Work Department</li> <li>• Traveller/Roma Community - Public Health Nurse</li> <li>• Family Resource Centre - Support Service Coordinator</li> <li>• Sligo/Leitrim Home Youth Liaison Service - Manager</li> <li>• Lifestart Supporting Parents CLG - Assistant Manager</li> <li>• Ballymote Family Resource Centre - Coordinator</li> </ul>

Table 6.2: Number of participating schools/colleges and county

County	School/College Type
Sligo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 Primary Schools – School Principals</li> <li>• 2 Secondary Schools – School Principals</li> <li>• 1 College – IT Sligo – Lecturer</li> </ul>
Leitrim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 Primary Schools – School Principals</li> <li>• 1 Secondary School – School Principals</li> </ul>

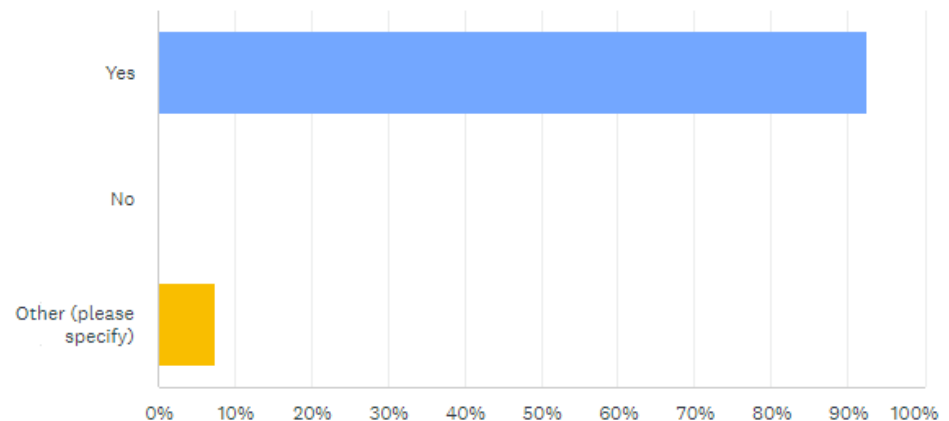
### The needs of young people engaged with services and schools

#### ❖ *6 Key messages about the needs of children and young people who attend these services and schools:*

1. There is a high level of need for resilience programmes for some children and young people. To meet the needs of these children and young people, programmes need to be intensive and ongoing.
2. There is a high prevalence of anxiety, low-mood, lack of confidence and lack of coping skills amongst young people in general.
3. Covid-19 has heightened the level of need and increased challenges in mental health amongst children and young people – three quarters of the participants stated that they have seen a significant increase in mental health problems, in particular social anxiety, and in the emotional and social need of children and young people since the pandemic began.
4. Some young people only require low to medium support around building resilience and could benefit from a more universal approach to programming.
5. Support is required on an emotional and social level using targeted and universal support.
6. The main areas of need appear to be around confidence and self-esteem, coping skills and low levels of resilience, understanding emotions, and regulating them and communicating what exactly it is that is going on with them.

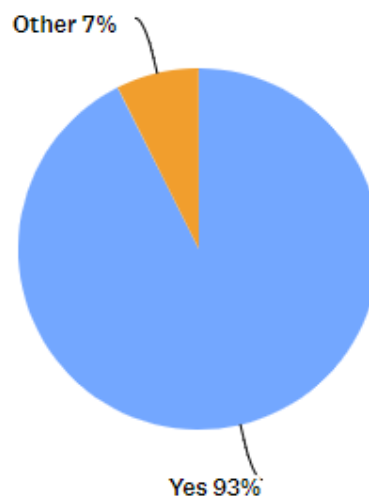
*“High level of emotional need and lack of resilience for children and young people attending individual services” Stakeholder Statement*

*Do you think that children and young people need access to resilience programmes?*



Over 90% agreed that children and young people need access to resilience programmes

*From your experience, do the children and young people you work with benefit from resilience programmes?*



### **Resilience programmes being delivered through participating services and schools**

The current need for the delivery of resilience programmes is very high in Sligo and Leitrim. The 6 key messages outlined above show that the level of support required is ongoing and intensive for some young people and more universal for others. A quarter of services and schools in this research stated a rise of mental health concerns. A large proportion of services and schools agreed that resilience programmes were needed, and that young people would benefit from them. Table 6.3 shows, by age category, the

programmes which are currently being delivered in Sligo and Leitrim. Each subcategory of age is divided into 3 headings. The first is ‘evidence/curriculum-based programmes’ which shows programmes that are either evidence-based or based on psychological theory in some way and programmes developed for national use. The second is ‘transition programmes’ and the third heading is ‘other interventions’ and these include less formal programmes. The least amount of programming appears to be for the early years’ sector with the 12-18 resource list showing the highest amount of programme options. 37 evidence-based formal programmes have been identified in all in both counties. This is a significant number of resilience programmes, and it shows a proactive and progressive drive to build resilience in the counties.

Table 6.3: Resilience programmes and resilience building initiatives delivered in Sligo  
Leitrim

Age Group	Programme Name/ Details/ Organisations Delivering
<b>Early years (Parents of 0-5 years old and children aged 0-5)</b>	<p><b><u>Evidence/curriculum based, formal, national programmes/initiatives</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Parents Plus</i> – Early years’ programme (Delivered by Foróige; Lifestart)</li> <li>• <i>Growing Child by Lifestart</i> (Delivered by Lifestart)</li> <li>• <i>Circle of Security</i> (Delivered by Lifestart)</li> <li>• <i>Fun Friends</i> (Delivered by Primary School)</li> <li>• <i>Aistear and Síolta Programme/Curriculum</i> (Delivered by Family Resource Centre; Sligo Springboard; Tubbercurry Family and Childcare Resource Centre)</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Transition Programmes (Preschool to primary school)</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>At Home in School</i> (Delivered by Lifestart)</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Other interventions:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive parenting skills training (Delivered by Youth Work Ireland North Connacht; Lifestart)</li> <li>• Parent and toddler groups - for healthy child development and social and emotional support for parents (Delivered by Ballymote Family Resource Centre)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play Therapy – for healthy child development and relationship building (Delivered by Sligo Springboard; Tubbercurry and Childcare Resource Centre; Ballymote Family Resource Centre)</li> <li>• Family Visitor service – social and emotional support for parents (Early years’ services)</li> <li>• Child and infant mental health project (Early years’ services)</li> </ul>
<b>Primary aged Children (parents of and children aged 5-12)</b>	<p><b><u>Evidence curriculum based, formal, national programmes/initiatives</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Rainbow Programme</i> (Delivered by Tubbercurry Family and Childcare Resource Centre)</li> <li>• <i>Parents Plus</i> (Delivered by Foróige; Lifestart)</li> <li>• <i>Stay Safe Programme</i> (Deliver by Primary Schools)</li> <li>• <i>Relax Kids Programme</i> (Delivered by Tubbercurry Family Resource Centre and Childcare Centre)</li> <li>• <i>Friends for Life</i> (Delivered by Secondary School; Leitrim County Childcare Committee)</li> <li>• <i>Mindful Matters</i> (Delivered by Primary School)</li> <li>• <i>Walk Tall</i> (Delivered by Primary Schools)</li> <li>• <i>Express Yourself</i> (Delivered by Ballymote Family Resource Centre)</li> <li>• <i>M-Pact Programme</i> (Delivered by M-Pact)</li> <li>• <i>The Decider Programme</i> (Delivered by Youth Work Ireland North Connacht; Foróige; Family Resource Centre)</li> <li>• <i>Level Up by Foróige</i></li> <li>• Primary school wellbeing curriculum</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Transition Programmes (Primary school to Secondary School)</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Belonging Plus</i> (Delivered by Secondary School)</li> <li>• Bespoke transition programmes (using Foróige programme design)</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Other interventions:</u></b></p> <p>Several services noted sports, arts, cooking and camps – these include Sligo Traveller Support Group; the Family Resource Centres and Schools).</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) (Delivered by Youth Work Ireland, North Connacht)</li> <li>• Play therapy (Delivered by Sligo Springboard; Tubbercurry and Childcare Resource Centre; Ballymote Family Resource Centre)</li> <li>• Counselling – Brief Intervention Service (Delivered by Ballymote Family Resource Centre; Tubbercurry Family and Childcare Resource Centre)</li> <li>• Coding (Delivered by Ballymote Family Resource Centre)</li> <li>• Sports</li> <li>• Arts</li> <li>• Cookery skills</li> <li>• Youth camps</li> </ul>
<b>Secondary aged young people and programmes delivered to parents of young people (aged 12-18)</b>	<p><b><u>Evidence curriculum based, formal, national programmes/initiatives</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A Life of Choices</i> (Delivered by Youth Work Ireland North Connacht)</li> <li>• <i>Decider Skills Training</i> (Delivered by Youth Work Ireland North Connacht; Foróige; Sligo/Leitrim Home Youth Liaison Service; Family Resource Centre)</li> <li>• <i>GROW</i> (Delivered by Youth Work Ireland North Connacht)</li> <li>• <i>Relationship Window</i> - Restorative Practice (Delivered by Youth Work Ireland North Connacht)</li> <li>• <i>Confidence Bootcamp</i> - age 11-14 (Delivered by Tubbercurry Family Resource Centre)</li> <li>• <i>Friends for Life</i> (Delivered by Foróige; Secondary School; Leitrim County Childcare Committee)</li> <li>• <i>M-PACT</i> (Delivered by M-PACT)</li> <li>• <i>REAL U; Health and Wellbeing Programme; Be Healthy, Be Happy; Leadership for Life Programme; Sound Surfers; Level Up</i> (Developed and delivered by Foróige)</li> <li>• <i>Putting the Pieces Together</i> - Drug Use Prevention Programme (Delivered by Foróige)</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Be Well; B4U Decide</i> (Developed and delivered Youth Work Ireland)</li> <li>• <i>Healthy Vs Unhealthy Programme</i> (Delivered by Sligo Leitrim Home Youth Liaison Service)</li> <li>• <i>Parents Plus - Working Things Out Programme</i> (Delivered by Sligo Leitrim Home Youth Liaison Service; Foróige)</li> <li>• <i>Helping Hands Programme</i> (Delivered by Sligo Leitrim Home Youth Liaison Service;</li> <li>• <i>Provoking Thoughts Programme</i> (Delivered by Sligo Leitrim Home Youth Liaison Service)</li> <li>• <i>Copping On Programme</i> (Delivered by Sligo Leitrim Home Youth Liaison Service)</li> <li>• <i>SPHE Curriculum</i> for secondary schools</li> <li>• <i>Consent and Disclosure Programme</i> (Delivered by Sligo Rape Crisis Centre)</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Transition Programmes (Transitions to Adulthood)</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The Ready, Steady, Life Programme</i> (Foróige)</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Other interventions:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As above plus;</li> <li>• Guest speakers on resilience and mindfulness (Delivered in Secondary School)</li> </ul>
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*“Young people need support to build coping skills, self-esteem, understanding their emotions and emotional regulation skills”.*

Stakeholder Statement

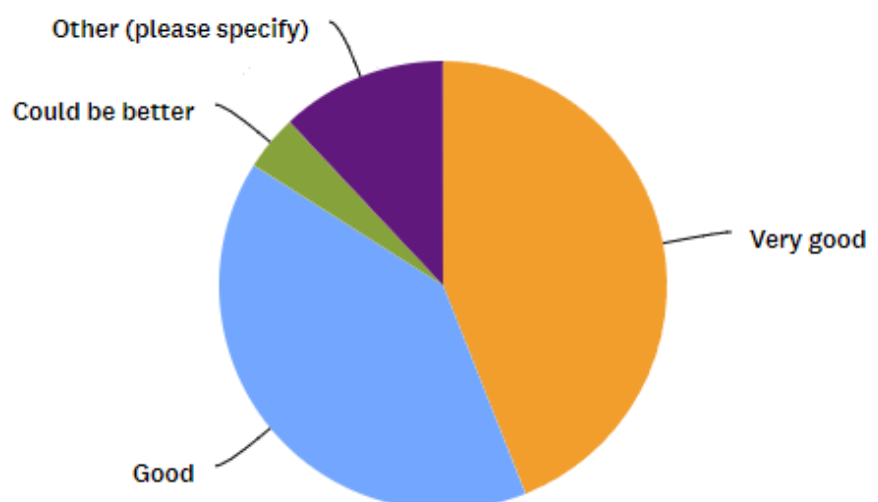
### Benefits and Barriers to attendance and delivery

*From stakeholder’s experience delivering resilience building programmes to children and young people, the benefits seen include:*

- Increased level of emotional/ feeling vocabulary which led to enhanced understanding of emotions and enhanced communication disclosing challenges or struggles.

- Improved confidence and self esteem
- Reduced anxiety and improved coping skills
- Better able to understand self and others
- School readiness improved
- Better child/ parent relationships
- Better child/school relationships
- Overall higher levels of wellbeing
- Gives participants a social network
- Awareness of emotional triggers
- Higher educational attainment and retention
- Less absences
- Increased motivation
- Gives them a sense of connection to the community
- Feel less alone
- Increased ability and capacity to deal with and manage everyday life challenges and adversities
- Greater belief in self

*What is attendance like when programmes are offered?*



❖ *15 Key messages about the barriers to attendance for children, young people, parents and families as outlined by stakeholders:*

1. Limited travel options are a barrier to attendance across both counties for children, young people, and parents. Lack of public services in rural areas and transport options to urban areas where the services are delivered is minimal and makes attendance at services and participation in weekly programmes difficult.
2. There is a stigma around certain services. Young people, or their families do not want to be associated with this. This stigma prevents young people from attending the services/ programmes.
3. There are high levels of anxiety amongst young people across both counties and services report young people not wanting to leave their house or participate in any form of group work with others.
4. Lack of commitment by parents and young people and in some instances, parents lack of commitment and support, results in the child/young person not being able to attend.
5. In some instances, group programmes can make parents feel that their parenting ability is being questioned. They need to be reassured that the programmes are focused on the child's development and ways to enhance it.
6. Information about programmes can be minimal at times. This can mean that potential participants don't have the information they need to make a fully informed decision on whether to attend/participate.
7. A lack of awareness around the benefits of programmes can result in low attendance.
8. Childcare can be a barrier to attendance, especially for parents with 0-2.5 year olds.
9. There are concerns around motivation to attend and the capacity to participate in programmes for some parents.
10. Some young people need specialist support prior to or running alongside the programme. Their needs are greater and require further support to build the capacity to engage fully.
11. Finding times for programmes that suit parents can prove difficult.

12. Services have found that cultural difference and language differences is a barrier for some children, young people and parents across both counties.
13. For some young people who may be or have been involved in criminal behaviour/activity, having the option to attend programmes rather than being ordered to by the courts prevents them from attending.
14. A barrier to consistent attendance for young people attending addiction services to avail of programmes and support is the active use of substances while engaged.
15. Young people with disabilities find it harder to engage in group-based programmes.

❖ *7 Key messages about the barriers to delivery that services and schools have experienced:*

1. Transport options for some participants are limited and this can result in them not being able to attend programmes. If attendance or uptake is low, it can result in programmes not being facilitated.
2. Access to specialist services at the point the young person requires support can prove difficult and this can be a barrier to delivery. E.g. external trainers, therapists.
3. Having a space to work from can sometimes prove difficult for both schools and services. Issues around scheduling and room occupancy can occur and become a barrier to delivery.
4. A barrier to delivery can be result of external pressures to fulfil a curriculum or reach a target number. This focus can prevent programmes being delivered and completed.
5. The time constraints of funded projects are a barrier for delivery.
6. It is important that relationships are built upon first with families in order to ensure buy-in from that family. If this relationship is not there, it can be harder to retain parents.
7. There is a cultural and language barrier to delivery in some instances.

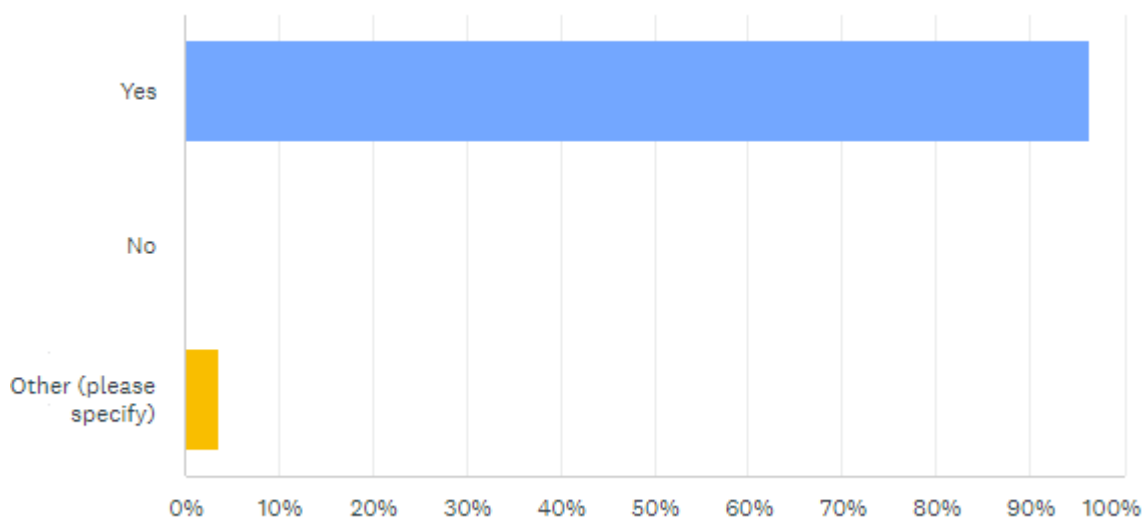
*“The overall need has increased throughout the pandemic. The cohort of students who experienced resilience/emotional need prior to the pandemic have been disproportionately negatively impacted upon”.*

Stakeholder Statement

## Level of commitment and openness to further training

Service providers who participated in this survey appear very committed to their work and this is evident in their efforts to build the resilience of children and young people. When we look at the number of programmes on offer, it is fair to conclude that the resources in both counties are strong. Chart 6.3 below shows the percentage of participants who are open to upskilling, even more so in regard to resilience building programmes. This shows a high level of commitment.

Chart 6.3: Participants who stated that they would upskill if required



## Conclusions

The results of this research show that Sligo and Leitrim are making very good progress with the programmes they use to build resilience and improve wellbeing of children and young people. The needs of young people suggest that both a low intensity and high intensity approach is required, and that staff need the time and flexibility to work with young people individually as well as deliver programmes at a group level. Stakeholders stated that they have seen an increase in mental health problems and that as a result of Covid-19, the level of social anxiety is rising. This is of great concern. Benefits of programmes thus far show that programmes can impact wellbeing positively and that they can help a young person to build the skills they need to improve their outcomes. One barrier to attendance was the level of social anxiety amongst children and young people. Some stakeholders stated that some people they work with do not want to leave their homes. Social isolation and access to public transport are also a concern especially if children, young people and families cannot access the supports they need. Language barriers and cultural barriers have shown to be a challenge when engaging minority groups and when delivering programmes. Room issues, double booking, and scheduling have also been shown to be a barrier to delivery for some services and schools.

The demand of the school curriculum and staff shortages was noted as a barrier to delivery of programmes for some schools, who stated that there is not enough time to focus on specialised wellbeing programmes that are not curriculum based. The importance of school focused resilience programmes is recognised however and so is the importance of positive transition periods. Work is being carried out through individual services, using both formal programmes and tailored programmes to help children and young people navigate the challenges of transitions (pre-school to primary / primary to secondary/ childhood to adulthood).

This research found that a wide range of programmes are being delivered, through a number of avenues, to all age groups and to parents, through both services and educational settings. This suggests that most, if not all young people in Sligo and Leitrim, have access to programmes which will increase their wellbeing. The bank of resources in both counties that build resilience, either directly or indirectly, is rich with 36 evidence-based, formal programmes identified as being delivered throughout the counties at present. Through consultation, there appears to be a gap in early years programming but the training in Triple P will fill this gap in some way if not completely.

A large number of facilitators have been trained in Triple P in both counties and this has great promise for the early years.

The research shows the negative impact on later life outcomes of trauma experienced in childhood and with a focus on minimising this impact, programmes need to be offered on an individual level as well as a universal one. International research shows something similar, with an added interest in whole community/ population approaches to building resilience in children and young people. The research shows that a population response has merit and is in many ways the very meaning of early intervention. With the findings of this research and the body of resources identified, Sligo Leitrim CYPSC Resilience Steering Group have a wonderful opportunity to coordinate the response that will support resilience building in children and young people now and in the future.

## Considerations, suggestions and pointers

1. 36 evidence based programmes are currently being delivered through the 18 services, 8 schools and 1 college who participated in this survey. While using the programmes that are already in practice in both counties is the most resourceful way to approach programming in the near future especially with the uncertainty of funding, investment in new approaches is also important. Investment can be in new programmes, but it can also be in how the current resources are managed and utilised. Pooling resources can be very beneficial to service provision and to the individual because if one service does not have a tool to support in one area, the shared resource pool will. It is suggested to explore with all stakeholders what resources can be pooled and how then, as a body of organisations, can you best deliver resilience programmes. For example, can services combine to deliver programmes? Can services use the expertise of other services for inputs during the programme? Can services share spaces and if one service does not have the space to provide a programme, could spaces be shared if needed? The more integrated the approach to resilience is, the better it is, not only for service provision but for children, young people, families and the community at large.
2. The early years is where the largest gap is seen in the provision of resilience building programmes. 3 evidence-based programmes were identified. Healthy Ireland Initiative (it was not disclosed which one in the survey) and both Aistear and Síolta are being delivered in early year settings. It was found through consultation with the Resilience Steering Group that a number of staff in both counties have recently been trained in Triple P, a positive parenting programme. This will likely fill part of that gap. Another way to fill that gap is to explore what programmes are being used nationwide. While it is very likely that programmes such as the IY Programme are being delivered in the counties, it is worth considering the training of staff in it. The programme has been used with Irish families for over a decade and has shown to have good results. It is worth considering some of the other pre-birth and from birth programmes, including Mellow Bumps and adopting the 'Resilience Alphabet' across all Early Years' settings. It is free resource tool that can be accessed online.
3. Transition programmes. Three formal programmes were identified, along with one tailored programme, a greater use of these in schools and services could be considered. The research suggests the importance of positive transitions and



transition programmes have been shown to make a difference to the progressing of a child into the next stages. The Jigsaw 'Toolkit for young people transitioning from primary to secondary school' is a free programme developed by Jigsaw Headstrong that could be adopted by schools to add to the curriculum. The Ready, Steady, Life Programme developed by Foróige is also a very beneficial tool for transitions into adulthood. It would be beneficial to explore the idea of the Foróige programme being delivered to or through schools and services outside the organisation, if this was something Foróige would consider.

4. With the rise in social anxiety across both counties and uncertainties around restrictions opening centres and numbers allowed into centres, a very flexible approach to outreach is required to ensure all young people who require wellbeing support have access to it. For some young people engaging with services and schools in both counties, leaving their home is a struggle and if this young person is open to working with a service, being able to visit them is crucial. With the high level of anxiety and in particular social anxiety, it is likely that in the immediate future, that outreach work will become an even greater component to the work of services.
5. For participants to provide the level of support that is required to young people, there needs to be a flexibility with resources and time. Some families and young people require intensive support and have a number of barriers to break down. To get that young person or that family to a place where they have the capacity and the ability to engage and participate in programmes of supports which build resilience can take time and this time needs to be granted to ensure that they get the support they need around resilience.
6. Participants noted that voluntary engagement can sometimes be a barrier in that if a parent does not want to engage, the child does not get to benefit. If that parent is engaged with other services or has a close connection with a staff member at a school, it can be useful and helpful to link in with that contact and together encourage the parent to participate.
7. Cultural differences and language barriers were found to be a barrier to both attendance and delivery. This is a concern and needs to be acted upon. While the resources may be limited, the more integrated services are, the more support that is available. To break down this barrier it is worth considering the establishment of a working group that supports one another when delivering resilience programmes. This may include a group with services that work with

the Travelling and Roma Community, services that work with both immigrants and refugees, services that work with translation services. The language barrier is the more challenging barrier to break down as it is very hard to have access to translators in every language. One way to respond to this could be to include a person from the minority community who has their native language but who is also proficient in the English language. They could act as an advocate to young people and perhaps help services to translate programme content or translate during the programme. The individual would have to be vetted and could work as an advocate on a volunteer basis or a paid one.

8. The more integrated and collaborative approaches can be, the greater the outcomes will be. When a 'whole community' approach is taken, change can occur very quickly. National and international research shows how whole population and whole school-based programmes can improve outcomes for children, young people and families. Research also shows that a child's environment can affect their later life outcomes. The variety of programmes being delivered in both counties is strong and from a wellbeing perspective, programmes offered have been found to meet the needs of children and young people but probably at a very individual or small group level. A county-wide focus or a 'whole community' initiative could be worth considering. If a parent is happy, a child is more likely to be. If a community is a positive thing to be part of, families will benefit overall.
9. The Decider Training has been rolled out across both counties and the programme is currently being delivered. It would be useful to document the workings and practice of this programme thus far to see if it is effective enough to meet the level of need we are seeing now at a community and individual level. Covid-19 has brought a whole new set of problems and tools which worked before need to be evaluated to ensure that over the coming years they will continue to facilitate positive change.
10. Going forward, it is worth considering other programme options as well as looking at the management of current resources. From the international research, one set of programmes which stood out because of their philosophy to resilience building and because they are continuously evaluated is iHeart. These programmes are very effective tools and because they are constantly evaluated, programme content is fresh and current.

11. The final set of suggestions worth considering come from the voices of stakeholders. When surveyed, participants offered several suggestions regarding the breakdown of barriers which may assist going forward.

- The first suggestion was that if a young person or family does have a particularly close connection with a service or school, the provider of the resilience programme could link in with them first to help them get the individual (s) on board.
- The second suggestion was that providers need to be able to meet the young person where they are both physically and mentally and therefore providers need to have the flexibility to do outreach work as much as is needed.
- It was suggested that where services are limited (rural areas) but where a small number of services do exist, it can be useful to connect with these services and to come to an agreement around using a space in their building for meetings with young people in the area if home is not an option.
- As stated above, some young people require support before they can participate in programmes and it has been suggested that in order to break down these barriers for the young person, flexibility needs to exist around the amount of time which can be spent either prior to or during the programme.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1.1 Survey for services and schools

Resilience Programmes being delivered children and young people aged 0-18 in Sligo and Leitrim.

#### **Research Information and Consent - PLEASE READ**

We thank you for taking part in this research to document resilience programmes currently being delivered to children and young people aged 0-18 years in County Sligo. By completing this survey, you are participating in a piece of research. The findings of this research will be used to document the programmes being delivered in the county. All information gathered will be confidential. In some instances, something you have shared in this survey may be presented as a quote in the research report. In this case, quotes will be anonymised, and your name will never appear in the report. By completing this survey, you are consenting to this information being used for this research and for your quotes to be used within the research.

We thank you for your time in completing this survey.

#### **What service do you work for and what is your role/ job title?**

- 1. Which of the following areas do you work with children/young people in?  
Please circle.**

- Early years services
- Family support services
- Youth services
- Children and youth justice services
- Primary schools
- Secondary schools
- Other educational institutions
- Other (please specify)

#### **1A. What county does this school/service operate in? Please circle.**

Sligo / Leitrim / Both

**2. What age are the children/young people you usually work with? If you work with several age groups, please tick 'other' and provide the information relevant to your role.**

- 0-5 years
- 5-12 years
- 12-18 years
- Other (please specify)

**2A. From your experience, what is the level of resilience/emotional need among children/young children you work with?**

**3. Does the work you do involve the delivery of resilience programmes to the children/young people/parents/carers?**

Yes / No / other (please specify)

**3A. If yes to above, did you engage with participants**

Face to face / Online / Both?

**3B. From your experience, would you agree that the children/young people you work with benefit from resilience programmes?**

Yes / No / other (please specify)

**3C. In what way do they benefit?**

**4. Under the age groups below, can you please name each programme that you deliver to these ages' groups? Please also add the exact age it is used with, and any resource requirements (human resources, licensing and cost, training, materials) needed to deliver these programmes.**

0-2 year olds

3-5 year olds

6-7 year olds

8-9 year olds

10-12 years old including any resilience programmes for school transitions e.g. Sixth class to first year.

13-15 years old including any resilience programmes for school transitions (sixth class to first year) and exam times.

16-18 years old including any programmes for school transitions (sixth year to college) or exam times

**4a. Were these programmes evaluated and were reports produced?  
Please briefly explain.**

**5. Would you say attendance at these programmes is**

Very good / Good Fair / could be better / Not good at all / Other (please specify)

**6. What are the barriers to attendance from your experience working with children/young people in the counties?**

**7. If barriers to delivery exist, what have you found to be the main barriers to delivery?**

**8. Does your school/service offer any form of training or upskilling to staff who support children and young people who are anxious?**

**9. 9. Would staff be prepared/willing to attend training once suitable/evidenced/evaluated programmes are identified?**

Yes / No / other (please specify)

**10. Is there anything else you would like to add?**

**Appendix 1.2a Cost, training, duration, materials and  
accreditation/certification/licensing details of programmes being delivered in  
Ireland**

\*where information was available

Programme Name/Series	Cost, training, duration, materials, accreditation/certification/licencing details
<b>FRIENDS (Fun Friends, Friends for Life, My Friends Youth Programmes)</b>	<p><b>Training Cost:</b> The license cost to deliver any of the FRIENDS programmes is determined by a variety of factors including the licensee’s implementation plan, overall reach and organisation size. All licenses are valid for three years. It is advised on the website to contact them directly for further details.</p> <p><b>Training details:</b> There are 2 training options. The first is Face to Face (online) with a trainer and the second is individually where the facilitators can complete the online skills training at their own pace. Training is offered in a Train the Trainer style so each licensed partner can train as many other staff as necessary in their organisation to become facilitators. This means that only one training expenditure is endured every three years to facilitate both training and programmes with children and young people.</p> <p><b>Duration:</b> Training can be completed online over any timespan.</p> <p><b>Materials cost:</b> A cost for the trainer manual is unknown and must be sought upon request of licence. The FRIENDS programmes all require each participant to have their own workbook. The cost of workbooks ranges from €20-50 depending on exchange rate.</p> <p><b>Course Materials:</b> Training resources include skills training videos, facilitators manual and training presentations. Once someone is trained as a facilitator they can access many useful online resources including activity material, poster and cards to compliment the activity book, book lists to support the work and videos.</p>







	<p>There 3 workbooks include; the manuals entitled Going Online with Mellow and Facilitated Online Mellow Bumps and Dads to be, plus a logbook for Parents to be.</p>
<p><b>Parents Plus (Early Years Programme)</b></p>	<p><b>Training Cost:</b> €490 per person</p> <p><b>Training details:</b> The training is both theoretical and practical offering facilitator's background theory of positive parents, tools to facilitate both group and individual programmes, skills to facilitate and manage group and session delivery. The support package offered is extensive including implementation support, advanced and specific training workshops (extra cost), extra resources including posters, certificates and articles for parents, and advice and guidance on evaluating and monitoring the programmes. The support package also offers 2 individual supervision sessions free of charge and sponsorship opportunities for further supervision upon application.</p> <p><b>Duration:</b> 5 online workshops usually ran over 1 week</p> <p><b>Materials cost:</b> €300</p> <p><b>Course Materials:</b> Two DVDs with 2.5 hours of footage of real family interactions, with comments from professionals and parents; a facilitator's manual with detailed guides to plan and deliver each session; two parent books, containing all the programme handouts and worksheets for participants; a copy of the book 'Parenting Pre-schoolers and Young Children' by John Sharry, Grainne Hampson and Mary Fanning and; posters to highlight key programme concepts</p> <p><b>Accreditations/Certification information:</b> On completing the facilitator training participants will be licensed to co-deliver this programme under supervision in their agency, to groups and with individuals. Accreditation can be gained for those who want to deliver the programme independently.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> 2 workers need to be trained in the programme to facilitate it.</p> <p><b>Training Cost:</b> €490</p> <p><b>Training details:</b> As above plus an extra focus on solution focused facilitation, building on parents' strengths and</p>
<p><b>Parents Plus (Children's Programme)</b></p>	

<p>Parents Plus (Adolescence)</p>	<p>strengthening inter-agency and community partnerships. The support package is the same as above.</p> <p><b>Duration:</b> 5 online workshops usually ran over 1 week</p> <p><b>Materials cost:</b> €300</p> <p><b>Course Materials:</b> Two DVDs with 80 minutes of scenes presenting role play scenes of family interactions, with comments from professionals and parents; a facilitator's manual with detailed guides to plan and deliver each session; two parent books, containing all the programme handouts and worksheets; a copy of the book 'Positive Parenting 'by John Sharry and; posters to highlight key programme concepts.</p> <p><b>Accreditations/Certification information:</b> As above</p> <p><b>Notes:</b> As Above</p> <p><b>Training Cost:</b> €490</p> <p><b>Training details:</b> As above plus extra opportunities to observe and practice the skills of becoming a solution focused facilitator as well as further skills training on using a strengths based approach.</p> <p><b>Duration:</b> 5 online workshops usually ran over 1 week</p> <p><b>Materials cost:</b> €300</p> <p><b>Course Materials:</b> Two DVDs with 60 minutes of scenes presenting role play scenes of family interactions, with comments from professionals and parents; a facilitator's manual; two parent books, containing all the programme handouts and worksheets; a copy of the book 'Parenting Teenagers' by John Sharry and; posters to highlight key programme concepts.</p> <p><b>Accreditations/Certification information:</b> As above</p> <p><b>Notes:</b> As above</p>
<p>Strengthening Families</p>	<p><b>Training Cost:</b> The price to complete the face-to-face training programme on the US website is \$4,900 (€4,330) for 36 or fewer individuals. The online training is currently being offered for \$1800 (€1,590).</p>

	<p><b>Training details:</b> Training is practical and theoretical with opportunities to practice the skills learned in training through role play. Facilitators will be guided by a master trainer who will provide them with all the skills and background required to run this 14-15-week programme.</p> <p><b>Duration:</b> 2 days training for service staff and volunteers offered through Strengthening Families Council of Ireland/ online training can be run over 3 days.</p> <p><b>Materials cost:</b> Materials for the Birth to 16 Programme are \$450 (€400) per module and it has 3 age specific modules. When the training is complete, participants will get one module included in the course price. This package is offered in CD format, and it gives trainers permission to copy all course materials to deliver the programme. Materials for the 7-17-year-old Programme come in Flash drive format and the full material pack costs \$520 (€460).</p> <p><b>Course Materials:</b> Videos, Leader manuals and Parent and Child/Teen Handbooks</p> <p><b>Accreditations/Certification information:</b> Not available but it appears that once trained, the facilitator can continue to use the programme without having to retrain.</p> <p><b>Notes:</b> For the programme to work best 4-6 workers for each organisation of partnership organisation should be trained in this to facilitate it. Facilitators must have access to supervision. Programmes must be evaluated.</p>
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**Appendix 1.2b Cost, training, duration, materials and accreditation/certification/licensing of programmes being delivered internationally (where information was available).**

<b>Programme Name/Series</b>	<b>Cost, training, duration, materials, accreditation/certification/licencing details</b>
<b>Bite Back</b>	<b>Training cost:</b> Free

	<p><b>Training details:</b> Training videos are provided on the <a href="http://www.biteback.org.au">www.biteback.org.au</a> website and can be accessed at any time</p> <p><b>Duration:</b> Training can be done at own pace</p> <p><b>Materials cost:</b> Free</p> <p><b>Course Materials:</b> Youth Educator Handbook, student access to a device and Wi-Fi. Available at <a href="https://www.biteback.org.au/Resources/BITE%20BACK%20Youth%20Educator%20Handbook%20-%20Digital%20version.pdf">https://www.biteback.org.au/Resources/BITE%20BACK%20Youth%20Educator%20Handbook%20-%20Digital%20version.pdf</a> / <a href="https://www.biteback.org.au/Youtheducators/Home">https://www.biteback.org.au/Youtheducators/Home</a></p>
<b>Bounce Back</b>	<p><b>Training cost:</b> \$199 (Aus.) for online training / €125</p> <p><b>Training details:</b> No training is needed for this resource</p> <p><b>Duration:</b> Training can be done at own pace</p> <p><b>Materials cost:</b> Inclusive in training cost</p> <p><b>Course Materials:</b> Handbook and downloaded resources</p>
<b>iHeart</b>	<p><b>Training cost:</b> Some resources are free but there is a fee to become a Certified trainer. iHeart is a charity and on their website they state that they have several fee options and this can be discussed prior to starting the training.</p> <p><b>Training details:</b> 4 module course with other 100+ hours or course content</p> <p><b>Duration:</b> Completed over a 3 months' period</p> <p><b>Materials cost:</b> inclusive once the training is complete</p> <p><b>Course Materials:</b> all materials required to facilitate iHeart will be available to the iHeart Portal. Once qualified all trainers will be automatically enrolled in iQual, an ongoing quality assurance and professional development programme.</p>
<b>Ignite Inspire</b>	<p><b>Training cost:</b> -</p>

<p><b>‘Positive Parrott and Negative Newt’ Books</b></p>	<p><b>Training details:</b> No training is needed for this resource and can be purchased by parents or early year providers as a take home resource for parents or as a resource for group session work.</p> <p><b>Duration:</b> -</p> <p><b>Materials cost:</b> £70/ €82 for set of 5 books; £20/ €23 per set of soft toy and £9/ €11.50 audiobook download each</p> <p><b>Course Materials:</b> Books can be used individually or with the soft toy aids and audio download.</p>
<p><b>‘Me Myself and I’ programmes for primary and secondary schools</b></p>	<p><b>Training cost:</b> -</p> <p><b>Training details:</b> No training is needed for this resource as a step-by-step guide is provided.</p> <p><b>Duration:</b> Training can be done at own pace</p> <p><b>Materials cost:</b> £495 / €580 (all programmes cost the same amount)</p> <p><b>Course Materials:</b> For primary school’s programme: Facilitators step-by-step session guide; student workbook and audio downloads. This price also includes the full set of ‘Positive Parrott and Negative Newt’ books (8 books in total). The secondary transition programme, ‘Thriving in Education Passport’, for learners coming up to exams. Also offered in the ‘Leaving Care Programme’, see website: <a href="https://inspireignite.co.uk/product/leaving-care-passport-education-package-5/">https://inspireignite.co.uk/product/leaving-care-passport-education-package-5/</a></p>
<p><b>Resilience Alphabet</b></p>	<p><b>Training cost:</b> Free.</p> <p><b>Training details:</b> No training is needed for this resource</p> <p><b>Duration:</b> N/A</p> <p><b>Materials cost:</b> N/A</p> <p><b>Course Materials:</b> Resilience alphabet graphics, presentation, programme details. Available from <a href="https://education.gov.scot/improvement/scotland-learns/health-and-wellbeing-activities/resilience-alphabet/">https://education.gov.scot/improvement/scotland-learns/health-and-wellbeing-activities/resilience-alphabet/</a></p>

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