

What Works Ireland Evidence Hub: Open Call for Programmes

Background

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) is working with the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) and the Centre for Effective Services to develop the What Works Ireland Evidence Hub of prevention and early intervention programmes. The Evidence Hub will be an online tool designed to increase access to effective prevention and early intervention programmes by making the best evidence on *what works* available to decision-makers, policy-makers, commissioners and other audiences.

The Evidence Hub will launch with over 100 programmes included on it. These are programmes that have evidence of improving child outcomes from scientific studies investigating their impact, and that have already been assessed by the Early Intervention Foundation for their online [Guidebook](#).

We are planning on adding information on 10 additional programmes to the Hub, focusing on programmes that are being delivered in Ireland. The evidence for these programmes will be assessed using the Early Intervention Foundation's standards of evidence (for more information please see [here](#)). For more information on the broader process of Programme Assessment, please see [here](#).

Programmes that undergo assessment *and* receive a Level 2 rating or higher will be included on the Evidence Hub. In addition to providing information on the strength of the evidence of an intervention, information will also be provided about key programme characteristics, including who the programme is designed for, how it is delivered, implementation requirements, key components of the programme, and a cost rating.

Programme developers, providers, or researchers who are interested in having their programme(s) included on the What Works Ireland Evidence Hub are now welcome to



submit an expression of interest. Below we provide information on the process involved in selecting the programmes that will undergo assessment.

Please note that all applicants who are selected for assessment will be required to consent to and comply with our Terms of Reference before detailed assessment begins. These will be shared with selected applicants before the assessment process begins. Please also note that programmes included on the Evidence Hub will also be included on the Early Intervention Foundation's Guidebook.

Selection of programmes for assessment

To select programmes for assessment, we will:

- Open a call for programme assessment where programme providers of prevention and early intervention programmes are encouraged to express interest in being assessed for the What Works Ireland Evidence Hub. As part of this submission process, providers will be required to submit an online form, providing some basic details on the delivery and implementation of their programme, as well as the evidence investigating its impact. The call will be:
 - Disseminated via twitter, organisational newsletters, websites and blogs
 - Sent to umbrella organisations of providers known to DCEDIY and CES and known relevant funders.
 - Sent to providers who have previously expressed interest to EIF for inclusion on its Guidebook
- Once the period to submit to the call has concluded, the submitted programmes will be scored according to a set of essential and desirable criteria, and on this basis a subset of programmes will be selected to go through the programme assessment process (see more on this below) for potential inclusion in the Evidence Hub.
- The selected programmes will be assessed using EIF's established procedure, involving oversight by a network of evidence experts. Programmes that receive a Level 2 rating or higher will be included in the Evidence Hub **and** EIF's Guidebook.

What is the scope of this work? What sorts of programmes are eligible for inclusion in the Evidence Hub?

Programmes will only be considered for assessment if they are **prevention or early intervention programmes which are clearly designed to improve one or more of the specified outcomes in children and young people, with at least some preliminary evidence of impact**. Furthermore, they must be **currently being delivered in Ireland**. These are our **essential criteria** for programme selection. Further detail on these criteria is as follows:

- 1) **Early intervention** - Submitted programmes must be early intervention programmes, i.e., they must be preventative in nature and not qualify as 'late intervention', i.e., acute, statutory, essential services that are required when children and young people experience significant difficulties in life, which might have been prevented. Specifically, programmes should qualify as either primary, secondary or tertiary prevention, and fit into one of the following three categories:
 - *Universal*: This applies to interventions that are available to all young people and families. These activities may take place alongside or as part of other universal services, including schools or family resource centres. Note: universal support is not necessarily intended for all families – programmes may specify a target age range, for example.
 - *Targeted-Selective*: This applies to interventions that target or 'select' young people or families with characteristics that place them at greater risk of experiencing problems. These characteristics can include economic hardship or having single or young parents.
 - *Targeted-Indicated*: This applies to interventions that target a smaller percentage of the population of young people or families who have a pre-identified issue or detectable markers that warn of the onset of a problem requiring more intensive support, e.g., programmes that target young people who are identified in pre-school, or by parents, as having behaviour problems.
- 2) **Programmes** - Services submitted to the Call must qualify as a programme, i.e., a 'well-

structured and clearly defined package of activity that is replicable, has clearly defined outcomes and costs, and the potential means to deliver the required quality of delivery either through fidelity to a manual, or through other forms of workforce support, monitoring and evaluation'. Broader practices (i.e., specific skills, techniques and strategies which are used by practitioners), on their own and outside of the context of a programme, will not be accepted.

- 3) Designed to improve one or more of the specified outcomes in children and young people** – Ultimately, submitted programmes must be designed to improve child outcomes (though the programme may seek to achieve this via mediating goals, for example, improving child outcomes via improving outcomes for the parent). For the Evidence Hub we are interested in programmes that are designed to improve outcomes for children and young people between the ages of **0 and 18** (i.e., programmes with a target population that overlaps with the 0-18 age range). Particularly, we are interested in the following child outcome categories:

Active and healthy, physical & mental wellbeing outcomes

- *Supporting mental health & wellbeing* – includes, for example:
 - Improving children's self-esteem, self-confidence and self-efficacy
 - Providing children with strategies for coping with depression and/or anxiety disorders
 - Preventing teen suicide and self-harming behaviour
 - Improving outcomes for children diagnosed with ADHD
- *Preventing substance abuse* – includes, for example:
 - Educating children about the risks associated with drinking and illegal drug use
 - Providing specific therapies for children with a drug or alcohol addiction.
- *Preventing risky sexual behaviour & teen pregnancy* – includes, for example:
 - Discouraging general risk-taking behaviours (such as binge drinking, antisocial behaviour, physically risky activities)
 - Providing specific information about contraception and safe sex
 - Targeting young women who are at risk of becoming pregnant and

carrying their child to term before the age of 18.

- *Preventing obesity and promoting healthy physical development* – includes, for example:
 - Targeting children identified as being overweight
 - Preventing children from becoming overweight in the first place.

Safe and protected from harm outcomes

- *Preventing child maltreatment* – includes, for example:
 - Increasing children's awareness of maltreating behaviours and methods for reporting it
 - Targeting specific risk and protective factors known to contribute to child maltreatment
 - Targeted interventions for children at the edge of care
 - Preventing children from entering the care system or reducing the time spent in out-of-home care.
- *Preventing crime, violence and antisocial behaviour* – includes, for example:
 - Improving children's behaviour at home or at school
 - Treating clinically diagnosed conduct or behavioural disorders
 - Preventing children from offending or re-offending.

Achieving in all areas of learning and development outcomes

- *Enhancing school achievement & future employment* – includes, for example:
 - Improving school achievement, including scores on standardised exams
 - Improving behaviour in school (including self-regulatory and prosocial behaviour)
 - Reducing rates of school exclusion and drop-out
 - Increasing completion of secondary school and entry into higher education or training

Economic security and opportunity outcomes

- *Enhancing future employment*- includes, for example:

- Increasing young people's success in finding a job or vocational skill.

4) At least preliminary evidence of impact on child outcomes - By 'preliminary' we mean meeting the requirements for a Level 2 rating on the Early Intervention Foundation's Standards of Evidence. A short-form of the Level 2 requirements are included below.

- To be considered preliminary evidence, an evaluation must:
 1. Have observed a statistically significant positive **child** outcome. While mediating goals (such as improved parent outcomes) may be associated with child outcomes, they are not sufficient in and of themselves, as they do not guarantee them and do not constitute *direct* evidence of impact on the child.
 2. Use independently validated measures
 3. Have a minimum of 20 participants in its sample
 4. Not exceed certain thresholds of study attrition (attrition cannot exceed 40% for pre-post studies, and cannot exceed 65% for comparison group studies)
- Examples of evaluation designs falling into the Level 2 category include quantitative impact evaluations, such as one-group pre-post studies, and also comparison group studies such as randomised control trials and quasi-experimental designs (which could also achieve a higher rating provided a set of other requirements are met).
- While these are the core elements of a Level 2 rating, please note that a range of other requirements are required of Level 2. The long-form detailed list of Level 2 requirements can be found [here](#), along with more information on the EIF Evidence Standards.
- The submission form will provide further information on how to submit evidence. Note that there is no limit on the number of evaluations that may be submitted, but we would discourage submitting large numbers of evaluations which do not meet the threshold for a Level 2 rating.
- **Please note that EIF cannot accept programmes when the evidence of impact is either not yet completed or is not yet published and/or written up.** All submitted studies must be written up in detail and contain detailed methodological information about the study design, its sample, attrition, analysis and findings. Otherwise, it will be difficult to determine whether they meet or exceed the Level 2

threshold. Ideally, these studies would be submitted in journal paper form, though they needn't be, provided whatever is submitted contains sufficient methodological detail such that we can apply our detailed evidence criteria.

Please also note the following:

- We are expecting to receive more programme submissions than we are able to assess. We will prioritise 10 programmes for assessment- 5 in 2022-23, and another 5 in 2023-24.
- Submitting a programme which meets all of the essential criteria is **no guarantee** that we will be able to assess the programme in 2022-23.
- If many programmes meeting the essential criteria are identified, we will prioritise within that set on the basis of a set of **desirable criteria**, factoring in the following:
 - Extent of implementation in Ireland – favouring programmes that are delivered more widely.
 - Number of impact evaluations (and high-quality impact evaluations- i.e., evaluations that meet the requirements for a rating of Level 3 on EIF's Standards of Evidence) conducted in Ireland itself.
- If a large number of submissions are received scoring highly on both essential and desirable criteria, we reserve the right to:
 - Prioritise on a first-come-first-served basis (i.e., priority given to those who submit their expression of interest earlier).
 - Prioritise within the received programmes along thematic lines – i.e., we may prioritise certain *types* of programmes for assessment in this round and return to others at a later date.
- This open call is for providers of programmes that are **not** already included on the Early Intervention Foundation's Guidebook.

Next steps in detail

The indicative timetable for the work is as follows:

Key milestone	Provisional dates
Expression of interest period	September to 8 th November '22
Selection of programmes	November '22
Detailed submission of programme information and evaluation evidence by providers (first set of 5 programmes)	November '22
Initial assessment by review team (first set of 5 programmes)	December '22 to January '23
Detailed submission of <i>cost information</i> by Providers (first set of 5 programmes)	December '22
Review meetings to finalise ratings and communication with Provider (first set of 5 programmes)	February '23
Final moderation and confirmation of ratings (first set of 5 programmes)	March 23'
Programmes included in Evidence Hub (first set of 5 programmes)	March 23'

The timeline for the second set of 5 programmes will be shared with programme providers closer to the time, but the work will begin in April 2023.

Please find more details on the stages where input will be required from providers below:

Expressions of interest period

1. Interested providers will be asked to complete a short form, expressing their interest in having their programme assessed for the Evidence Hub. This involves submitting details on the following features:

- Details of the programme and its delivery.
- Details of the evidence for the programme.
- A description of how the programme meets the criteria outlined above (pgs. 3-6).

Selection of programmes

2. Once we have received a final set of programmes that have expressed an interest in being included on the Evidence Hub, we will use the selection criteria to choose a final set of programmes to assess.

Submission of detailed programme information and evaluation evidence

3. Providers selected for review will then be asked by the Early Intervention Foundation to submit more detailed information about the programme via an online questionnaire including:
 - The practitioners required to deliver the programme.
 - The supervision required to deliver the programme.
 - Details of the licensing, accreditation, booster training, programme materials.
 - Further details on the evidence for the programme.

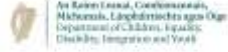
We hope that this process reduces the burden on providers, ensuring that only programmes that will go forward to assessment are asked to submit detailed information

Submission of detailed information on programme costs

4. Detailed submission to the Early Intervention Foundation of information on programme implementation and costs from programme providers will be provided via online questionnaire.

Review panel meetings and communication with provider

5. A review panel meeting will take place, which involves small groups of subject-matter experts (academics and researchers) and staff from the Early Intervention



Foundation meeting to review the detail of each assessment and agree a Strength of Evidence rating. Following this, the strength of evidence and cost rating for each reviewed programme will be communicated to the respective programme provider after the review panel meeting.

6. Following this, providers have an opportunity to request a reassessment of the strength of evidence rating from the Early Intervention Foundation if they consider that a reasonable case could be made that there has been a misapplication of the detailed criteria underpinning the EIF Standards of Evidence when evaluating and assessing the programme.