



Early Learning Initiative

National College of Ireland

A Better Future for Ireland's Children

"We love our children. We want them to do well. We don't know how."

This was the message in 2006 from parents in the Dublin Docklands to the Early Learning Initiative (ELI), National College of Ireland.

With support from The Ireland Funds, our Parent Child Home Program (PCHP), an innovative, home based literacy and parenting program, has helped hundreds of parents to develop the confidence and skills to support their children's language, literacy and numeracy development.

Our PCHP families often live in areas that suffer from generational, long-term problems of social deprivation, poverty, poor educational attainment and mass unemployment. Public violence, which ranges from aggressive shouting to more serious violent crime, is public and in sometimes in clear view of the children. Most of the families live in very overcrowded cramped conditions with children finding it difficult to learn to sit up, crawl and walk. Screen time has impacted severely on children's language acquisition with the majority of the children non-verbal on entering the program; frustrated and aggressive because they can't express themselves. The sense of isolation is very high with the Home Visitor often the only person to call to these families from one week to the next.

In their twice weekly visits, a sense of stability is achieved. The Home Visitors use high quality educational books and toys to model for parents how to talk, play and read with their children. The parents then continue the activities in their own time. As one dad said, "It's a winner. He takes out them books. The wife would read to him most nights. I have seen the improvement." Our longitudinal studies have found that PCHP children are doing well in school. A typical comment from parents is, "It built up my child's language skills. He is in first class and he can read at third class level. Through PCHP he got the foundations for learning for life."

Ten years on, families are still using the books and toys provided by The Ireland Funds. One parent told us, "I would never have read books if it wasn't for the program." Another told us, "He asks for a story for bed....and just the other night, he went on into bed. I said, 'Go on in and I'll follow you in in a minute' and he has the whole bag that he carries around with him with (PCHP) books in. When I went in, he said 'Mam, I read this by myself.'" Interestingly, many PCHP children act as Home Visitors to their young siblings.

While PCHP ensures that children are school-ready, we strongly believe that continued input is needed to address long-term intergenerational educational disadvantage. Our PCHP children receive on-going support through ELI's literacy, numeracy, robotic coding and educational guidance programmes. This year, the Robotic Coding Challenge was won by Grace, a PCHP graduate, whose mother is now working as a Home Visitor.

Our Home Visitors are all local early-school-leavers, who are determined to create a better future for their own children and the children they work with. All now have a Level 5 Early Years qualification with 11 working towards their Level 8. Michelle Moore, one of the first Home Visitors, is now a Coordinator and graduated with her degree in November, 2017. Easily recognizable in their distinctive uniforms, they are ambassadors for education on the street.

Described as "ambitious and innovative in the Irish context", PCHP is changing lives through education. As one teacher said, "ELI are doing tremendous work in our community. The children are benefiting, the parents are being educated and the teachers are getting so much support! It is such a positive experience to be part of it and I feel very lucky to be part of it as a Mammy and a teacher! Keep up the good work."

Given our belief in its transformational impact, our vision is to provide PCHP to more children throughout Ireland. Hence, we are moving, with The Ireland Funds' support, into a digital era. Our Home Visitors use a CRM system to record data that will enable us to assess more effectively the short-term, medium-term and long-term impact of the program.

As another exciting decade begins, we thank The Ireland Funds and their many donors for the support they have given us over the past ten years. We look forward to working with you to help many more children achieve their dreams.

— Dr. Josephine Bleach, Director, Early Learning Initiative
at the National College of Ireland

The Ireland Funds' support has now enabled

**24,000+ PCHP
Home Visits to
289 families**



Photos: Aengus McMahon

**Molly and her
mother, Fern**

Molly and her
Home Visitor,
Amy

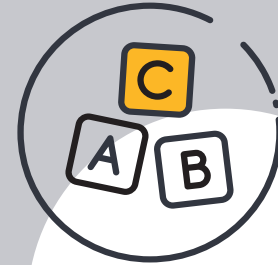
GIRLS
SUPP♥RT
GIRLS

Parent Child Home Program

The Ireland Funds have provided **11,000+ high-quality educational books + toys** to assist families with language, literacy and numeracy skills



99% of families have found PCHP useful and feel confident in using the strategies for reading and playing with their children.
100% feel supported by their Home Visitor



84%

of children's language, behavior and cognitive skills improved

82%

of children were meeting their developmental milestones in cognition in May 2017 compared with 27% in November 2015

75%

of children were meeting their developmental milestones in language in May 2017 compared with 15% in November 2015



After participating, **89% of parents** display more affection towards their children with 76% consistently demonstrating high quality interactions with their children