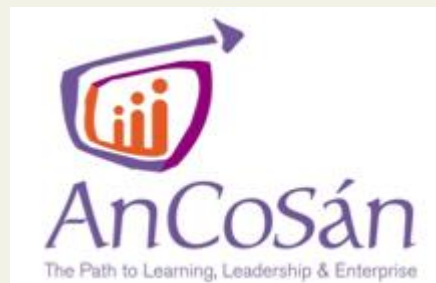


A child is climbing a colorful play structure in a park. The structure consists of several horizontal bars in blue, red, and yellow, supported by a blue frame. The child is wearing a purple and blue plaid shirt and dark pants. The background is a lush green lawn and dense trees.

# Quality Through Professionalisation

## *Key Learning & Legacies*

MARLENE MCCORMACK, MAREESA O'DWYER & MAURA MCMAHON





Background to the Quality through Professionalisation Project

# Project Rationale

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1. Need to professionalise and upskill the early childhood care and education workforce
2. The location of the services in this project provided an additional rationale for the programme. Services involved in The Quality through Professionalisation programme are located in areas of urban disadvantage - The Starting Strong II Report ([OECD, 2006](#)), evidences that young children experiencing poverty are more likely to benefit from the provision of high quality early childhood care and education.
3. The office for the Minister of Children and Youth Affairs (2009) required that any service participating in the free preschool year must agree to provide an appropriate educational programme for children, adhering to the principles of Siolta.

# Project Location

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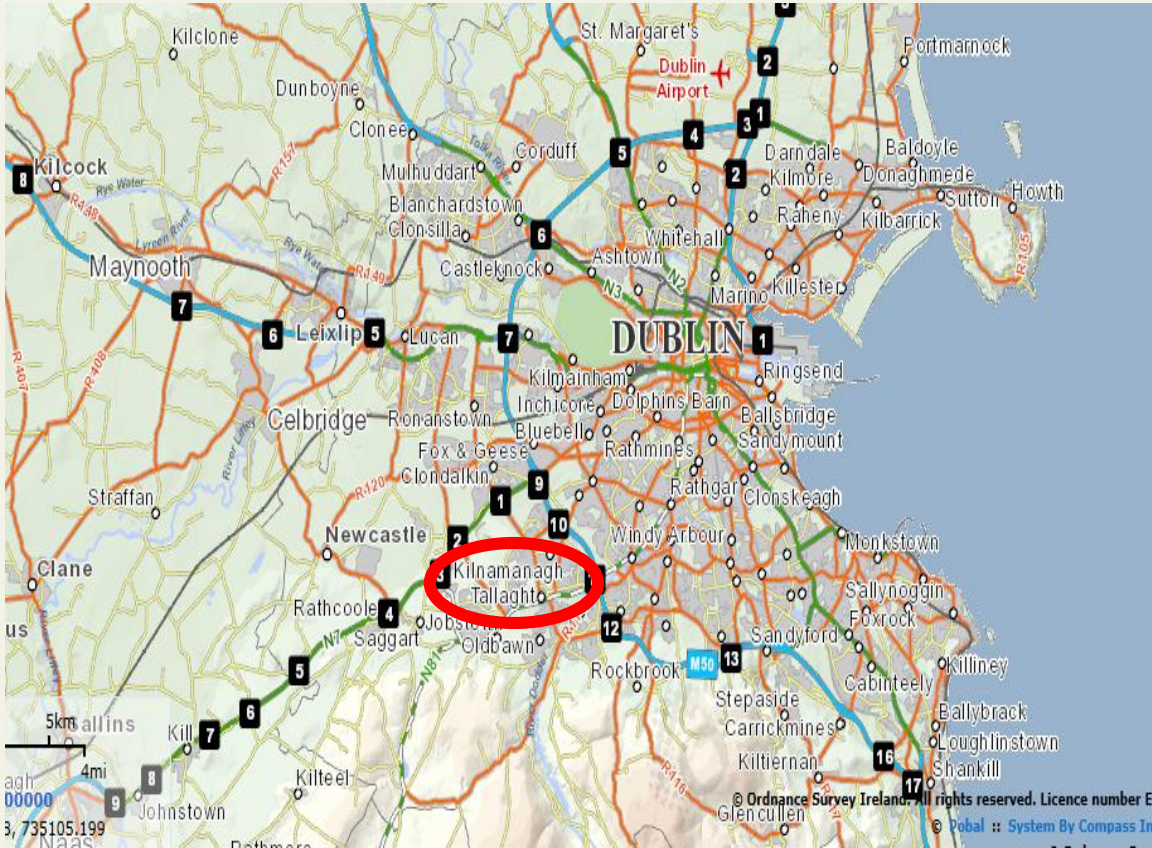


**Total population of Ireland: 4.6 million**

**Population of children under 5 years: 421,266**

**Percentage accessing the free preschool year: 94%**

# Demographical Information



# Geographical Location of Preschools



## Unemployment Rates



Range  
14% - 54%

## Third level qualification



Range  
11% - 47%

## Lone Parent



Range  
6% - 71%

# Project Background

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Cornerstone of the project was to **develop a comprehensive, accredited, professional education and training programme** focused on implementing Aistear and Siolta in HighScope settings.





# Process known as “Alignment”

## Appendix 2: The aims of Aistear’s themes linked to HighScope’s Pre-school KDIs & COR Theme: Well-being

Aim 1: Children will be strong psychologically and socially

The theme of Well-being is about children being confident, happy & healthy		HighScope Pre-school	
Learning goals	Readiness content areas	KDIs	COR
<p><b>In partnership with the adult, children will:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. make strong attachments and develop warm and supportive relationships with family, peers, adults in out-of-home settings and in their community</li> <li>2. be aware of and name their own feelings, and understand that others may have different feelings</li> <li>3. handle transitions and changes well</li> <li>4. be confident and self-reliant</li> <li>5. respect themselves, others and the environment</li> <li>6. make decisions and choices about their own learning and development.</li> </ol>	Approaches to Learning	<p><b>Planning:</b> Children make plans and follow through on their intentions.</p> <p><b>Problem solving:</b> Children solve problems encountered in play.</p> <p><b>Initiative:</b> Children demonstrate initiative as they explore their world.</p> <p><b>Engagement:</b> Children focus on activities that interest them.</p> <p><b>Reflection:</b> Children reflect on their experiences.</p>	<p><b>Initiative</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Making choices and plans</li> <li>B. Solving problems with materials</li> <li>C. Initiating play</li> </ol>
	Language, Literacy and Communication	<p><b>Speaking:</b> Children express themselves using language.</p>	
	Physical Development and Health	<p><b>Personal care:</b> Children carry out personal care routines on their own.</p> <p><b>Healthy behaviour:</b> Children engage in healthy practices.</p>	
	Social and Emotional Development	<p><b>Building relationships:</b> Children build relationships with other children and adults.</p> <p><b>Conflict resolution:</b> Children resolve social conflicts.</p> <p><b>Empathy:</b> Children demonstrate empathy towards others.</p> <p><b>Cooperative play:</b> Children engage in cooperative play.</p> <p><b>Sense of competence:</b> Children feel they are competent.</p> <p><b>Emotions:</b> Children recognize, label and regulate their feelings.</p> <p><b>Moral development:</b> Children develop an internal sense of right and wrong.</p>	<p><b>Social relations</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>D. Relating to adults</li> <li>E. Relating to other children</li> <li>F. Resolving interpersonal conflict</li> <li>G. Understanding and expressing feelings</li> </ol>

Links to Stolta: Standard 1: Rights of the Child, Standard 3: Parents and Family, Standard 13: Transitions

# Fledglings Manual

## What is Aistear?

Aistear is the early childhood curriculum framework for all children from birth to six years. Aistear is the Irish word for journey and was chosen because early childhood marks the beginning of children's lifelong learning journeys. The framework can be used as a guide in planning learning experiences in sessional, full and parttime daycare settings, infant classes in primary schools and child minding services. It can also be used by parents in children's own homes. Aistear includes principles, themes and learning goals. The 4 themes are Wellbeing, Communicating, Identity and Belonging and Exploring and Thinking.



## What is Síolta?

Síolta is the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and was developed by the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills. Síolta is designed to define, assess and support the improvement of quality across all aspects of practice in early childhood care and education (ECEC) settings where children aged birth to six years are present. Síolta works based on 12 principles and 16 standards. These 16 Standards translate the vision of the principles into the reality of practice and include: Rights of the Child, Environments, Parents and Families, Consultation, Interactions, Play, Curriculum and Planning among others.



## History of An Cosán

An Cosán is the home of an organisation founded over 20 years ago. It is seen as a path to learning, leadership and enterprise in the heart of the community of Tallaght West. It was originally created in 1983 and called "The Shanty Educational Project" and it was set up to address the problems of poverty and disadvantage affecting people in this community. Its founders Ann Louise Gilligan and Katherine Zappone dreamed and set out to create a community based education project that would empower through education and bring about social change.

In 1996 in response to ever growing demand for education and childcare, a Centre of Learning, Leadership and Enterprise was built and situated in Jobstown where it remains today. In 1999 the building was named An Cosán meaning the path or the way which created a flagship to support the running of other sections one of which being Fledglings Training & Fledglings Early Years Education and Care.



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Killicavan Village Centre,  
Jobstown, Tallaght,  
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# Welcome to Fledglings



Fledglings  
Early Years  
Education & Care

# The Training Programme

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There were **two phases** of training associated with the Quality through Professionalisation programme, namely:

	1. Training of Trainers	2. Training of Early Years Educators
<b>Duration</b>	6 days	7 days
<b>Manual</b>	Tutors Manual	Fledglings Manual
<b>Number of participants</b>	21 enrolled 16 completed	42 enrolled 32 completed
<b>Delivery methods</b>	Workshops, Small group work, Large group work, Discussions, Practical demonstrations	

# Focus on Adult Education Principles

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1. Adults **need to be involved** in the planning and evaluation of their instruction
2. **Experience** (including mistakes) provides the basis for the learning activities
3. Adults are most interested in learning subjects that have immediate **relevance and impact to their job** or personal life
4. Adult learning is **problem-centered rather than content-oriented** ([Kearsley, 2010](#)).

# The Training Programme in Action

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# Methodology

# Overview of research methodology

<b>Research Framework</b>	RE-AIM (Glasgow et al. 1999)
<b>Research design</b>	(1) Cross-sectional (2) Process evaluation
<b>Tools</b>	Preschool Quality Assessment (PQA) Interviews Direct observation Focus groups Reflective logs
<b>Data analysis</b>	<i>Process evaluation:</i> Content analysis - Thematic review  <i>PQA:</i> Descriptive statistics Cross-tabulations

# RE-AIM Framework

(Glasgow et al. 1999)

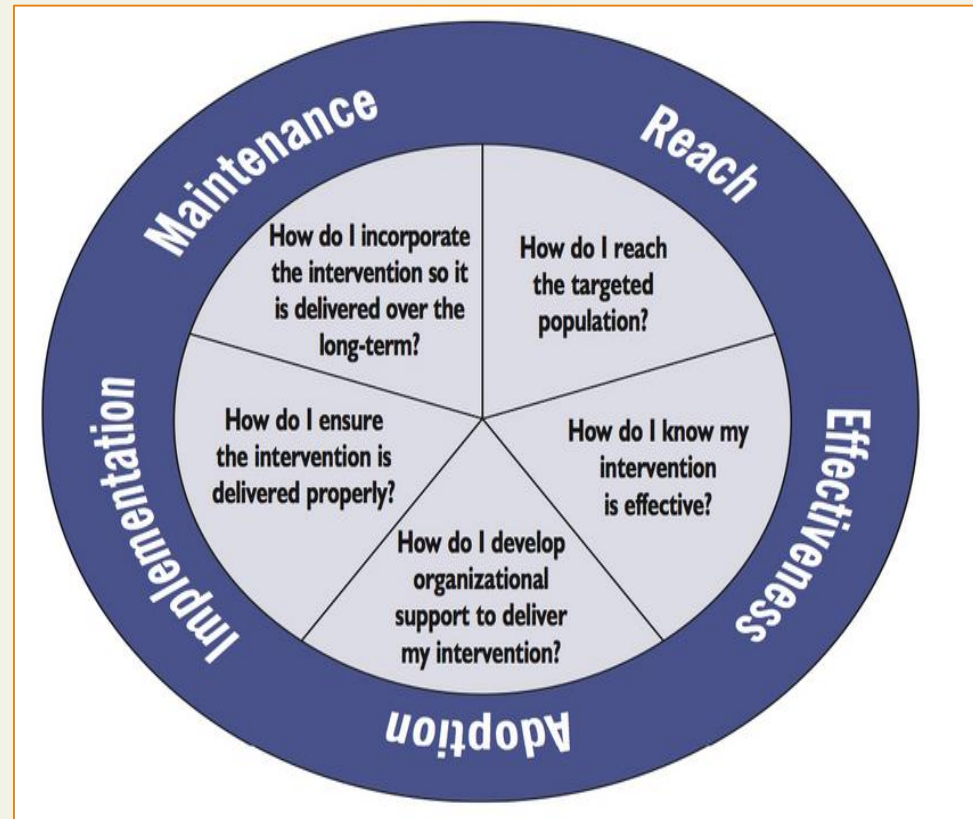
**R**each

**E**ffectiveness

**A**doption

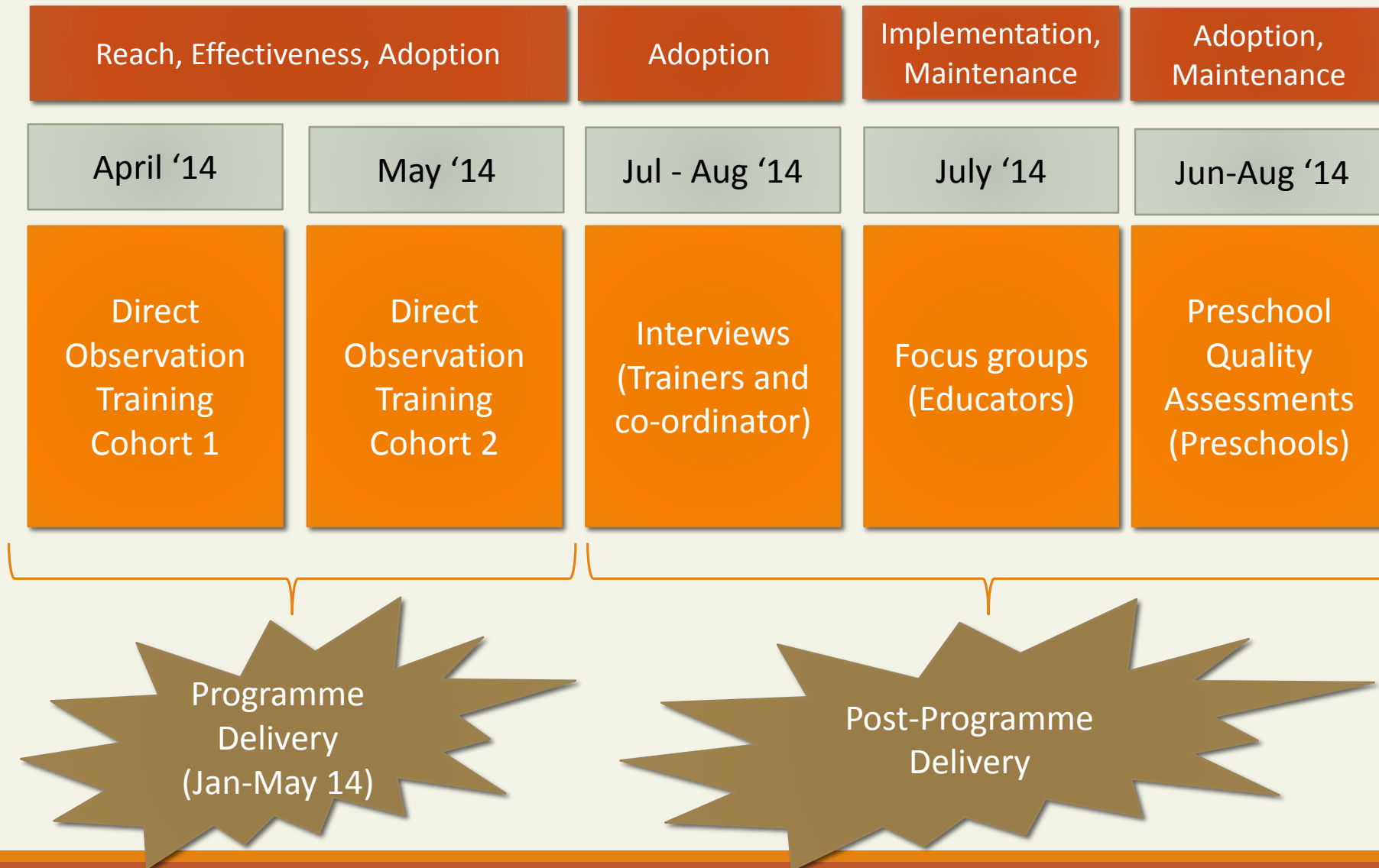
**I**mplementation

**M**aintenance





# Timeline of evaluation





# Findings

# 1. Engaging in change – the importance of the ‘lead-in’ phase

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For change to be successful a number factors must be considered, these include:

- ❖ Time to prepare for change
- ❖ Excellent planning
- ❖ Commitment to the programme outcomes
- ❖ A shared vision within the consortium (project management team)
- ❖ Delivery of consistent messages
- ❖ Effective leadership.

## 2. Staff training has a short-term impact

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There are a number of considerations:

- ❖ Timing of the training is acceptable to those participating
- ❖ Adequate time between training sessions
- ❖ Develop and utilise internal expertise
- ❖ Consider quid-pro-quo arrangements between organisations
- ❖ Provide ongoing booster training to consolidate learning
- ❖ Ensure programme trainers have undergone specific training to ensure programme fidelity
- ❖ Active training methods are recommended when providing training to adult learners.

# Quote – An Early Years Educator (Active Learning)

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*“I had lots of fond moments in the training – I enjoyed it thoroughly but I think my favourite would have to be the group activities. I enjoyed talking to the other girls and getting ideas, it’s only through talking it through with others that the theory makes sense. I remember one time talking in groups discussing different curriculums and thinking this is very interesting and a great opportunity for me to learn new things”.*



# 3. Translating learning into practice

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Key learning points include:

- ❖ Time for early years educators to plan practice
- ❖ Time for trainers to plan training delivery
- ❖ Formation of communities of practice
- ❖ Informing practice using the evidence gathered.

# Quote - Early Year Educator (Time)

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*“The training enabled us to understand where all the alignments are and how we were going to use this information when completing our development plans. However, I think the most important factor in all of this is time; time must be allocated to working specifically on this new approach – we can’t be expected to undertake all of this extra work with no extra time – it wouldn’t make sense”.*



# 4. Involving the users of the programme

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The benefits of this way of working includes:

- ❖ Recruitment and retention rates are likely to be better
- ❖ Concerns about fairness are addressed
- ❖ Acceptability of the programme is enhanced
- ❖ Effective implementation of the programme is heightened
- ❖ Higher chance of producing implementable data.



# 5. Monitoring and evaluation

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To further explore the long-term effectiveness of this programme an evaluation focussing on the implementation of the Quality through Professionalisation programme within preschool settings is warranted.

It is recommended that this occurs at 6 months to assess medium-term effectiveness and 12 months to assess long-term effectiveness, post programme delivery

# Programme Legacy

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## **1. Link to national frameworks to aid sustainability**

Utilising Aistear and Siolta within services

## **2. Building staff capacity**

Exit route via Level 6 and Level 7 modules

## **3. Sign-posting for parents & staff**

Production of comprehensive programme resources

# Acknowledgments – big thank you!

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# Contact Details

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