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Marlene  
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Early  
Childhood  
Ireland

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**Quality through  
Professionalisation:  
Evaluation of the  
Tallaght National  
Early Years  
Access Initiative**

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# Overview of Presentation

- Background & Rationale of Programme
- Overview of Training programme
- Aim of Evaluation
- Overview of Research Methodology
- Key Findings
- Key Learning & Legacies



# Background to the Programme

To develop a comprehensive, accredited, professional education and training programme which would focus on the implementation of the An Cosan / Fledglings Manual.

**síolta**

The National Quality Framework  
for Early Childhood Education



INSPIRING EDUCATORS *to* INSPIRE CHILDREN



QQI AWARD

# Rationale for the programme

- ❖ Professionalise and upskill the ECCE workforce using current frameworks
- ❖ Better prepared, skilled and competent workforce improves the quality of centre based early childhood experiences for children (Vandenbroeck, 2011)
- ❖ Services located in areas of disadvantage
- ❖ Young children experiencing poverty are more likely to benefit from the provision of high quality ECCE (Starting Strong II Report, OECD 2006)

# Aim and Objectives of the Evaluation

*To investigate the implementation of the Quality through Professionalisation programme to trainers and early years educators.*

## Objectives:

1. Conduct a profile analysis of the preschools involved in the programme
2. Assess the quality of provision within services post-training delivery
3. Ascertain the perceived impact on early years educators knowledge, skills and competencies
4. Investigate the experiences of the managers/trainers who participated in the programme
5. Conduct a process evaluation investigating the reach, effectiveness, adoption, implementation and maintenance of the training programme

# The Training Programme

Two **phases of training** associated with the Quality through Professionalisation Programme:

1. Training of Trainers
2. Training of Early Years Educators

**Programme resources** to support the training for both programmes included:

1. The An Cosán/ Fleda
2. The Training
3. The descriptor
4. The brochure
5. Special Purpose Award QQI Level 7 Additional Needs.

7 days of training were delivered between January and July 2014

# Programme Resources



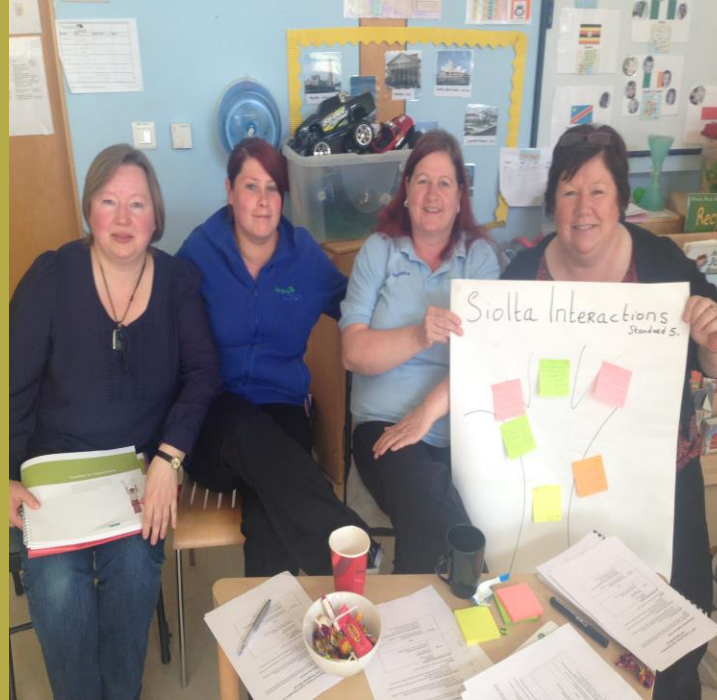
## Appendix 2: The aims of Aistear's themes linked to HighScope's Preschool KDIs & COR Theme: Well-being

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>	<p><b>Approaches to Learning</b></p>	<p><b>Planning:</b> Children make plans and follow through on their intentions.  <b>Problem solving:</b> Children solve problems encountered in play.  <b>Initiative:</b> Children demonstrate initiative as they explore their world.  <b>Engagement:</b> Children focus on activities that interest them.  <b>Reflection:</b> Children reflect on their experiences.</p>	<p><b>Initiative</b></p> <p>A. Making choices and plans                      B. Solving problems with materials                      C. Initiating play</p>
	<p><b>Language, Literacy and Communication</b></p>	<p><b>Speaking:</b> Children express themselves using language.</p>	
	<p><b>Physical Development and Health</b></p>	<p><b>Personal care:</b> Children carry out personal care routines on their own.  <b>Healthy behaviour:</b> Children engage in healthy practices.</p>	
<p><b>Social and Emotional Development</b></p>	<p><b>Building relationships:</b> Children build relationships with other children and adults.  <b>Conflict resolution:</b> Children resolve social conflicts.  <b>Empathy:</b> Children demonstrate empathy towards others.  <b>Cooperative play:</b> Children engage in cooperative play.  <b>Sense of competence:</b> Children feel they are competent.  <b>Emotions:</b> Children recognize, label and regulate their feelings.  <b>Moral development:</b> Children develop an internal sense of right and wrong.</p>	<p><b>Social relations</b></p> <p>D. Relating to adults                      E. Relating to other children                      F. Resolving interpersonal conflict                      G. Understanding and expressing feelings</p>	

A variety of training methods were utilised throughout the delivery of the training with an emphasis on 'active training'. Active training is recognised as a suitable and effective approach within an adult learning environment where the participants do most of the work, in order to acquire knowledge and skills as opposed to receiving them (Silberman and Auerbach, 2011). Some of the training delivery methods promoted within the Quality through Professionalisation programme include:

- Workshops
- Small group work
- Large group work
- Discussions
- Practical demonstrations





# Overview of Research Methodology

Research Framework	RE-AIM (Glasgow et al. 1999)
Research design	(1) Cross-sectional (2) Process evaluation
Tools	Preschool Quality Assessment (PQA) Rating scales Direct observation Interviews Focus groups
Data analysis	<i>Qualitative data:</i> Content analysis  <i>Quantitative data:</i> Descriptive statistics Cross-tabulations Correlations

# RE-AIM Framework

(Glasgow et al. 1999)

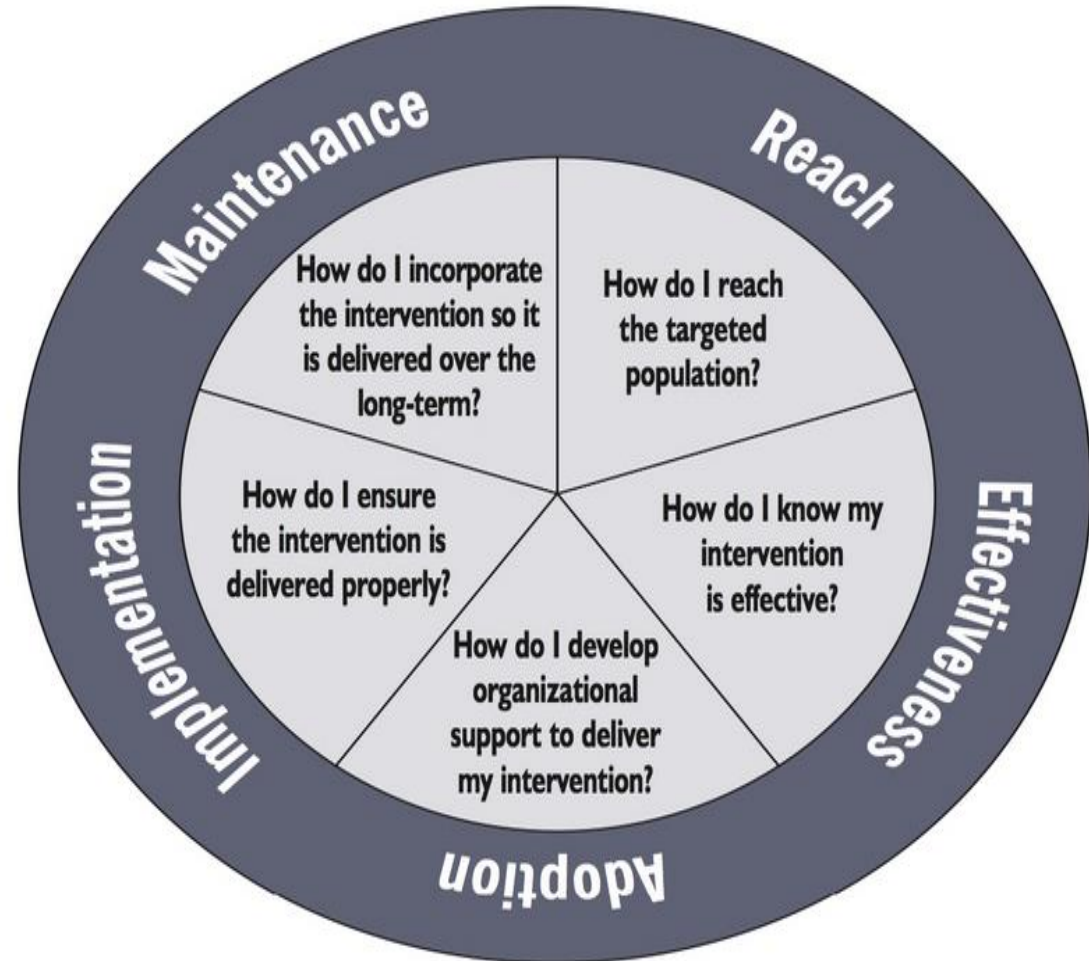
**R**each

**E**ffectiveness

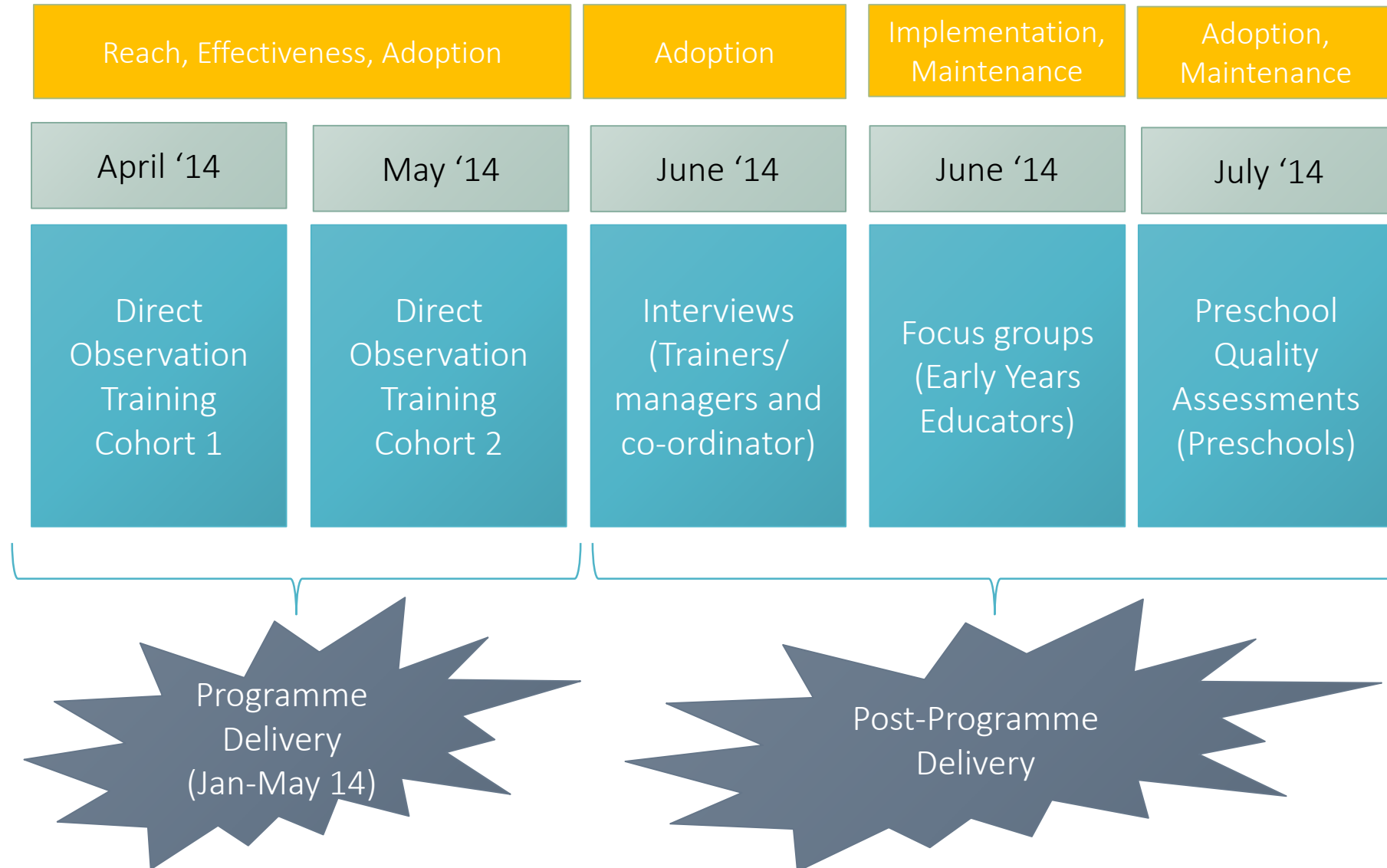
**A**doption

**I**mplementation

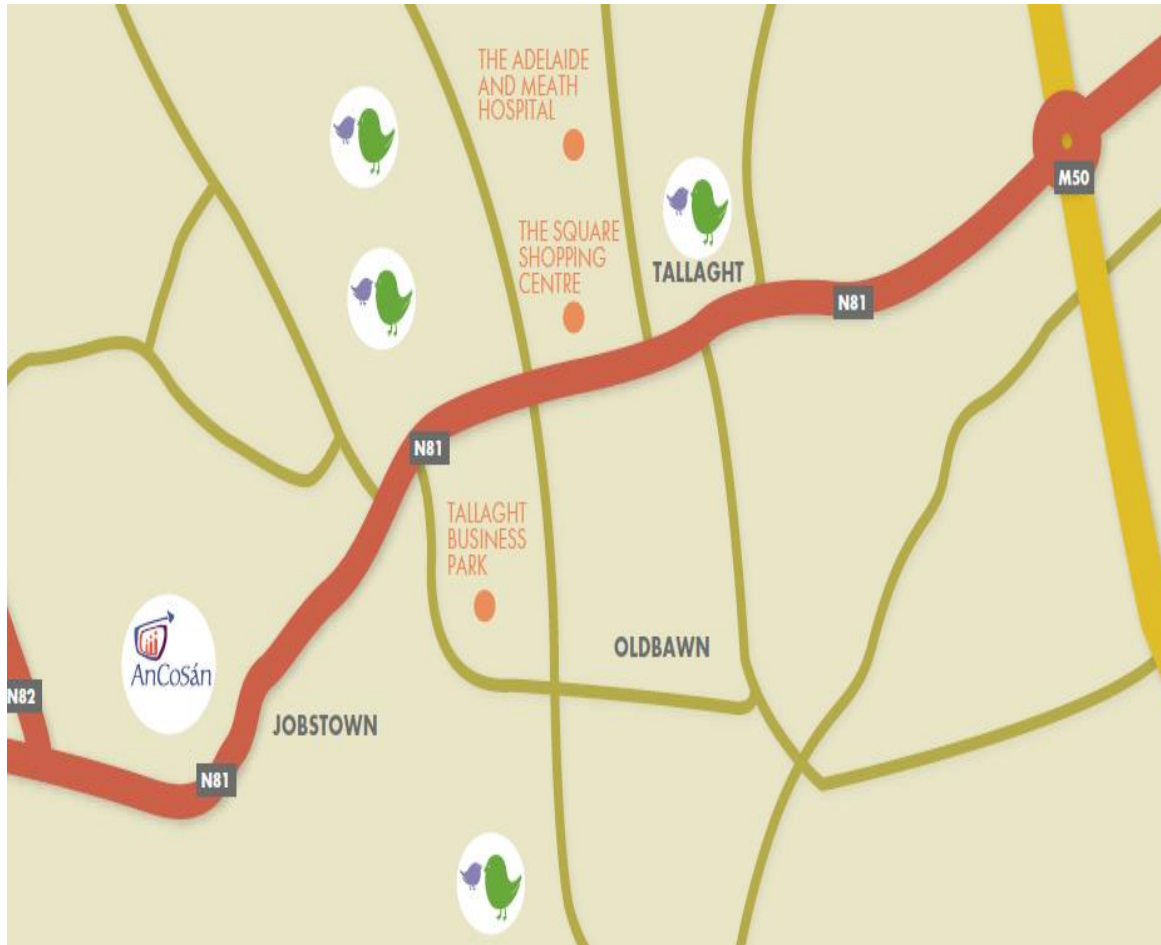
**M**aintenance



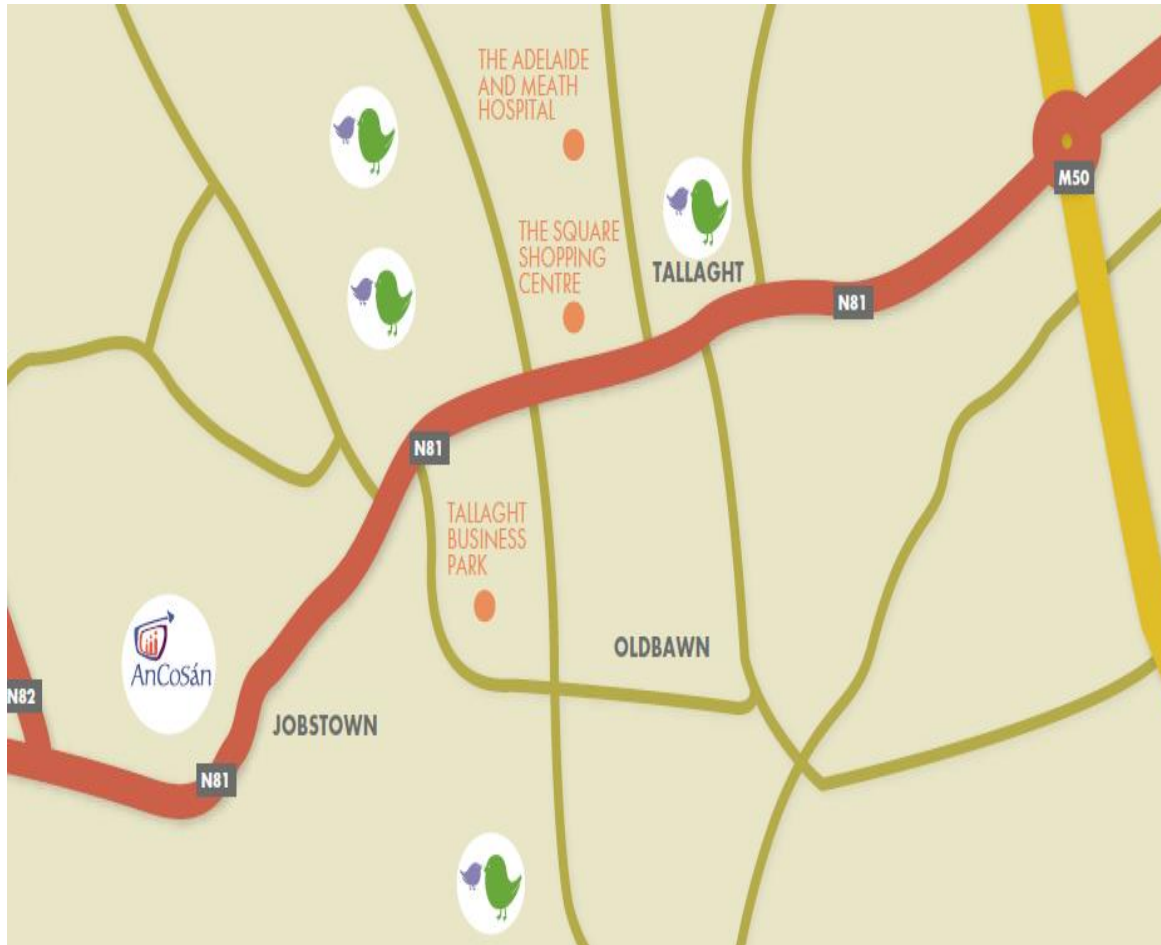
# Timeline of Evaluation



# Demographical Statistics



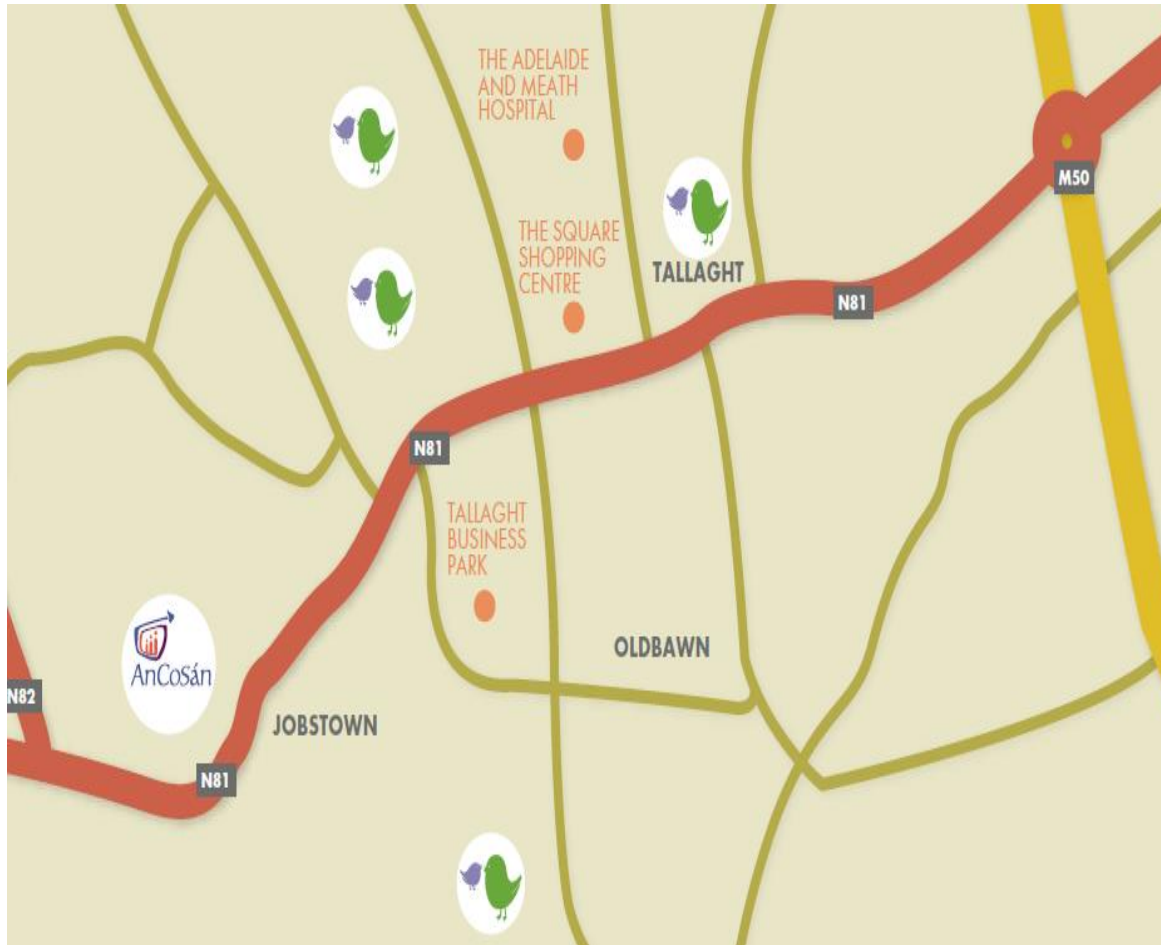
# Demographical Statistics



THE POPULATION  
OF TALLAGHT

72,251

# Demographical Statistics



UNEMPLOYMENT  
RATE RANGED FROM

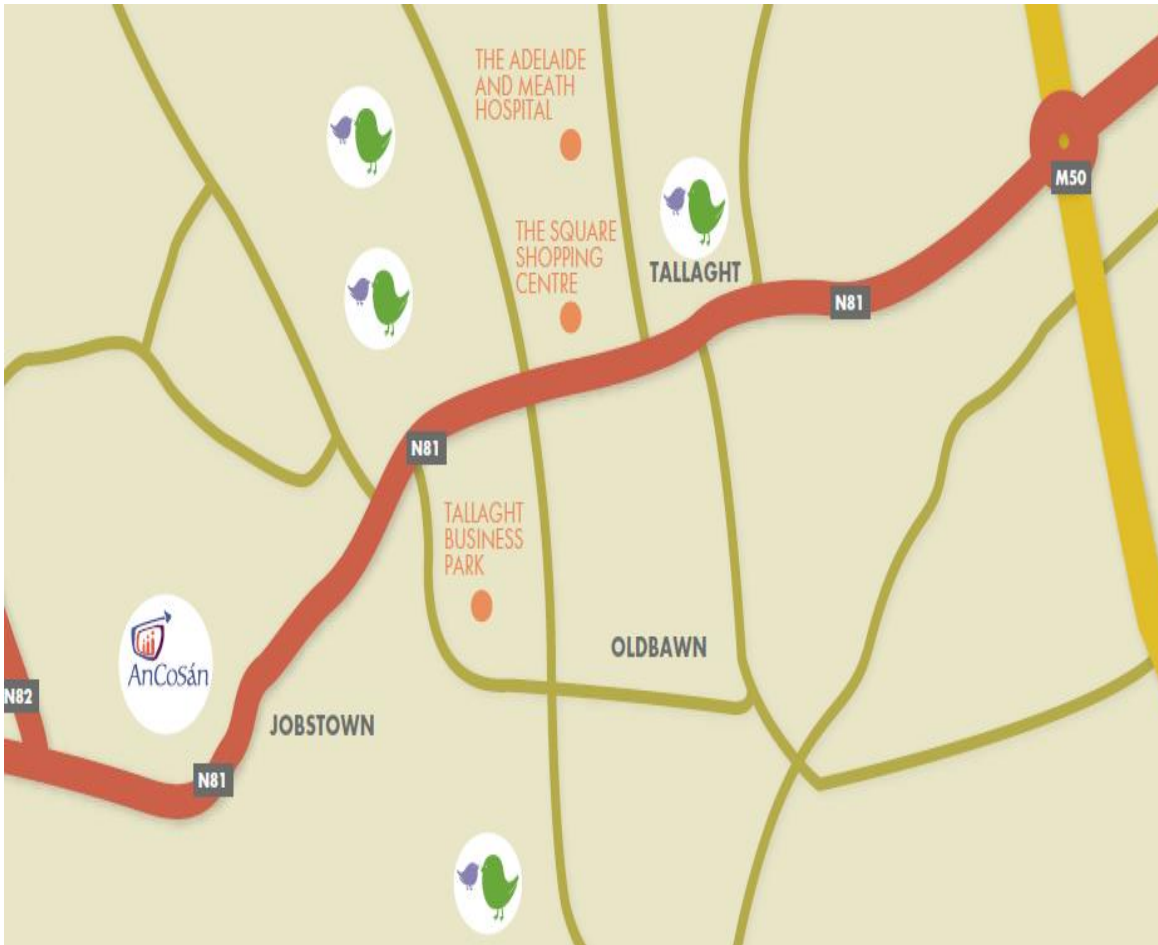
**14 – 54%**



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OF TALLAGHT

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# Demographical Statistics



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THE POPULATION  
OF TALLAGHT

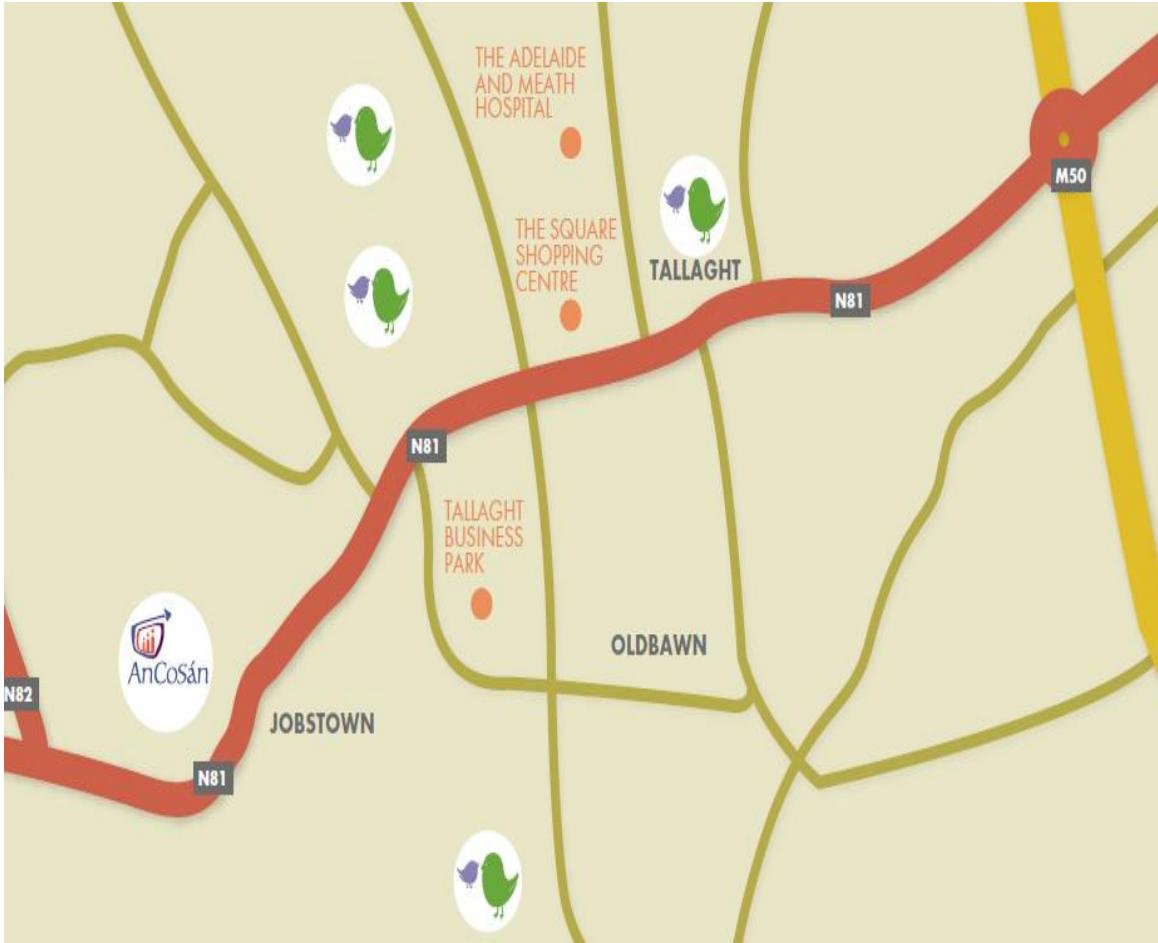
**72,251**



THIRD LEVEL  
QUALIFICATION  
RANGED FROM

**10 – 46%**

# Demographical Statistics



**2** preschools  
WERE LOCATED  
IN AREAS OF  
'disadvantage'

UNEMPLOYMENT  
RATE RANGED FROM  
**14 – 54%**



THE POPULATION  
OF TALLAGHT

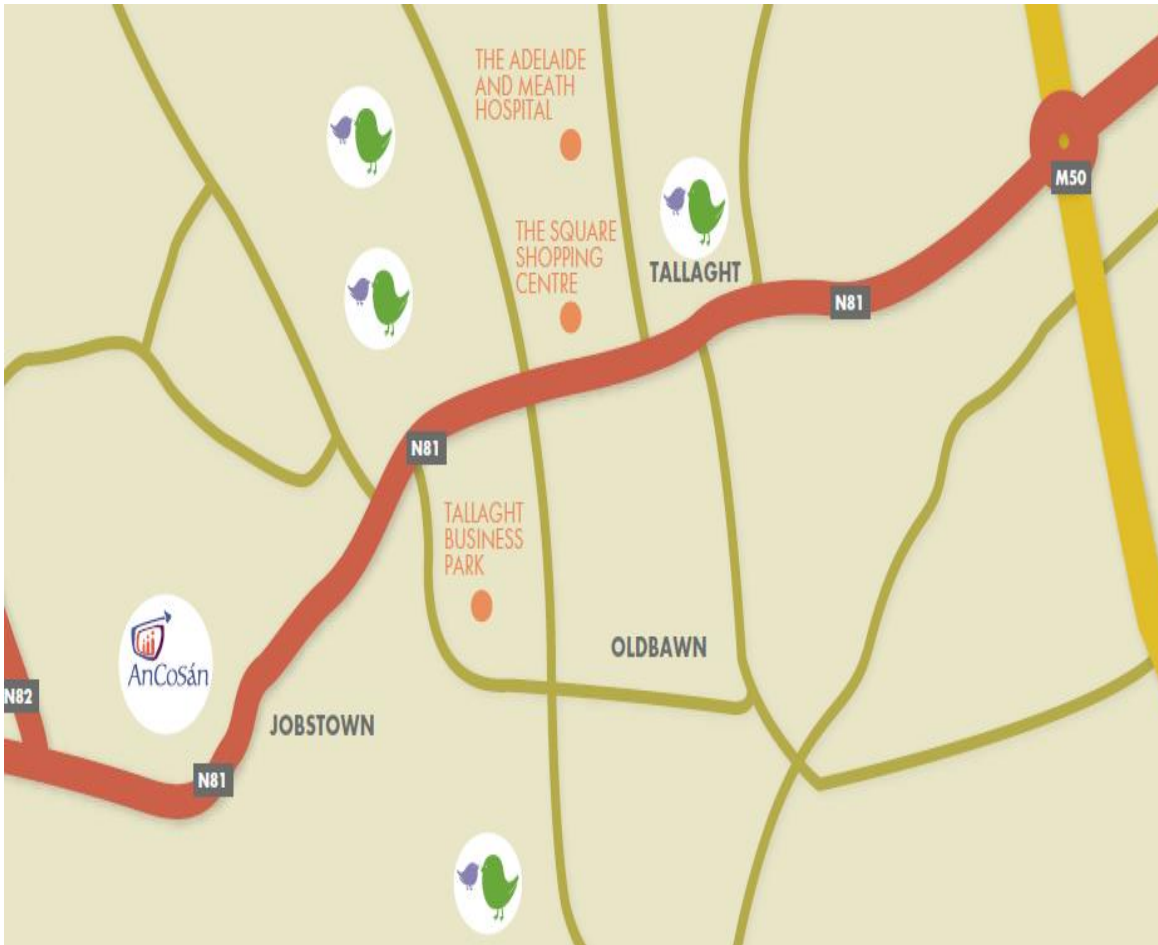
**72,251**



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# Demographical Statistics



**2** preschools  
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 UNEMPLOYMENT  
RATE RANGED FROM  
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THE POPULATION  
OF TALLAGHT

**72,251**



THE NUMBER OF  
**LONE PARENTS**  
RANGED FROM  
**4 – 71%**



**THIRD LEVEL**  
QUALIFICATION  
RANGED FROM  
**10 – 46%**

# The Programme Participants (p.39)

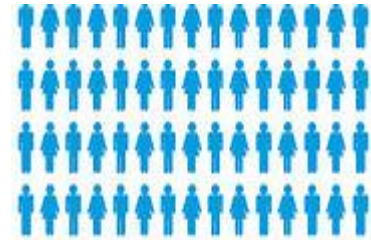
	n	%
<b>Preschool Characteristics</b>		
Number of preschools	5	100
Sialta validation	0	0
Sessional	4	80
Full day-care	3	60
Baby room	2	40
Wobbler room	3	60
Toddler room	3	60
Preschool room	5	100
High-scope curriculum	5	100

<b>Child Characteristics</b>	
Number of children	270 ± 31

<b>Preschool Staff Characteristics</b>		
Number of staff	55 ± 5	
Average number of staff per service	11.0 ± 4.3	
Number of fulltime staff	24	43.6
Number of part-time staff	31	56.3
Number of CE staff	2	3.6
Number of staff with level 4	5	9.0
Number of staff with level 5	44	80
Number of staff with level 6	18	32.7
Number of staff with level 7/8 (Ord./Hons. Degree)	10	18.2
Number of staff with level 9/10 (Mas./ PhD)	1	1.8
Number staff with no qualification	2	3.6

The number of children participating in the programme

270



The number of staff working within the services

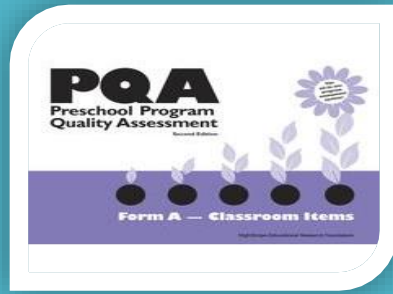
55



FETAC Level 5 was the dominant qualification

44





Quality within preschools



Trainers perspectives of programme



Programme Impact on Staff

# Results: Preschool Quality Assessment

	Learning Environments	Daily Routine	Adult Child Interactions	Curriculum Planning and Assessment	Overall Score
Mean (SD)	3.4 (0.4)	3.2 (1.0)	2.8 (0.4)	3.5 (1.0)	3.2 (0.6)
Minimum	2.8	2.5	2.2	2.0	2.4
Maximum	3.7	3.6	3.2	4.2	3.6
p-value	0.07	0.06	0.01 **	0.1 *	0.06

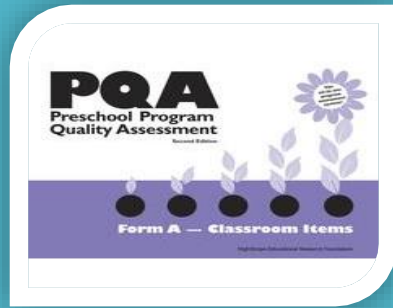
Levels of significance: \*\*\*  $p \leq 0.001$  = very significant; \*\*  $p \leq 0.01$  = moderately significant; \*  $p \leq 0.05$  = significant

# Curriculum Planning & Assessment

- Evidence of HighScope curriculum being used to guide teaching practices
- All literature on the walls inside and outside of the rooms were derived from the HighScope curriculum model
- Staff observed maintaining records on children and families
- Staff sometimes use a team teaching model and share responsibilities for planning and implementing programme activities
- Staff use observation as a method to assess children's developmental progress.

# Adult-Child Interactions

- Increased use of open-ended questions
- Strategies to promote interactions with children whose first language was not English
- Increase anecdotal note-taking
- Using language to model and name
- Involve children in conflict resolution
- Minimise interruption of conversations
- Promote child-initiated play



Quality within preschools



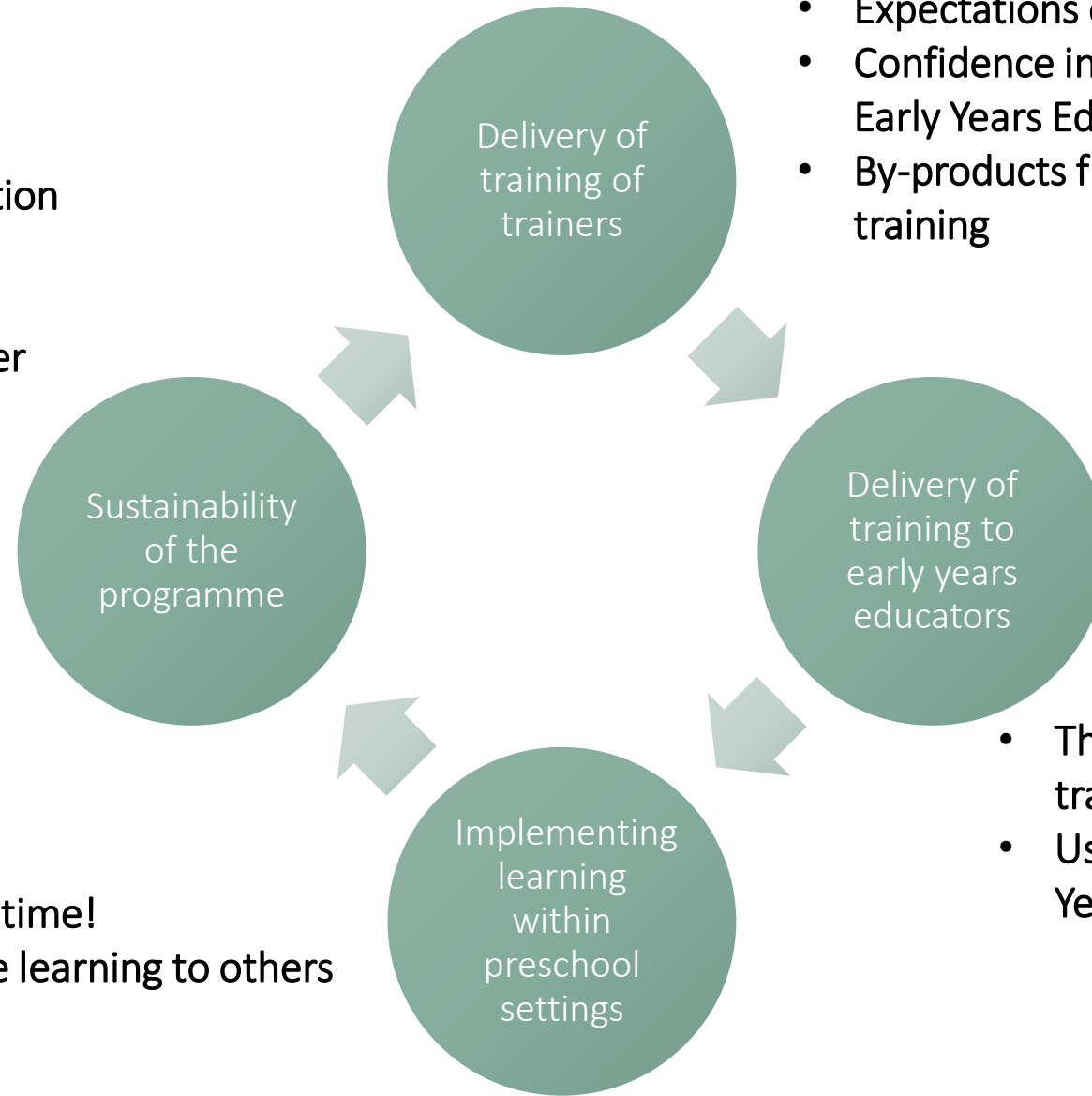
Trainers perspectives of programme



Programme Impact on Staff

# Interviews: Trainers Experiences

- Time is a key consideration
- Readiness for change
- Community of practice
- Annual training refresher



- Expectations of training varied
- Confidence in delivering training to Early Years Educators
- By-products from participating in the training

- All we need is time!
- Translating the learning to others

- The structure and scheduling of the training programme
- Using the An Cosán / Fledglings Early Years Manual





Quality within preschools



Trainers perspectives of programme



Programme Impact on Staff

# Perceived Impact on Staff

	Before Training (Mean, SD)	After Training (Mean, SD)	Difference	p-value
Knowledge	3.09 (0.43)	3.86 (0.64)	0.77	0.000 ***
Skills	3.14 (0.35)	3.81 (0.61)	0.67	0.000 ***
Competence	3.18 (0.50)	3.77 (0.53)	0.59	0.001 ***

Levels of significance: \*\*\*  $p \leq 0.001$  = very significant; \*\*  $p \leq 0.01$  = moderately significant; \*  $p \leq 0.05$  = significant

# Participant Feedback after Training

"I feel more confident implementing this learning within my setting. We already have elements of all three implemented but this training has highlighted how to further develop and work with Aistear, Siolta and HighScope. The An Cosán / Fledglings Early Years Manual will help hugely with this process".

"As the training has been completed, there is more familiarity with the required aspects of Siolta, Aistear and HighScope to fill in a Development Plan in comparison to when I began the training programme. However we need more practice and more time to cement our familiarity with the Development Plan".

"This training has been of most benefit to me in learning about Siolta and Aistear. I know we have these in my setting but I didn't really know much about them and always tried to avoid them but now I am way more confident in using them".

I have enjoyed learning about Aistear and Siolta and would be grateful for more time to put it into practice as it could fizzle out quite quickly. A refresher course later down the line would be something that would benefit us as we implement all this change in our setting".

# Focus Groups: Staff Experiences

- Well organised and well planned
- Clear understanding from outset
- Good communication
- Effective tutor
- Scheduling of training
- Interactive & stimulating activities

## 5. Necessary ingredients for training programmes

## 1. Knowledge of training prior to commencement

- Inconsistency in knowledge
- Anxiety about taking part
- Feeling of discontent (Level 6)

- Increased knowledge of Aistear and Siolta
- Less daunted about frameworks
- Working more as a team
- Using action and development plans
- Non-contact time required

## 4. Impact of the training programme on practice

## 2. Staff perception of quality within early years settings

- The second half of training
- Opening Circle activities
- The trainers
- Working in groups

## 3. Fondest memories of the training programme

- Predictors of quality don't work in isolation
- Fostering an ethos of CPD
- Child focused approach
- The use of a well-established curriculum
- Low staff child ratios
- A good manager

# Key Learning & Legacies

- ❖ Engaging in Change – The Importance of time and the ‘Lead-in’ phase
- ❖ Involving the Users of the Programme
- ❖ Continued Professional Development has an Impact
- ❖ Translating Learning into Practice



## LEGACY OF THE QUALITY THROUGH PROFESSIONALISATION PROGRAMME

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**1.**

**LINK TO NATIONAL FRAMEWORKS TO AID SUSTAINABILITY**

Utilising Aistear and Síolta 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



# Sign-posting for Policy

- ❖ Allocation of child-free hours
- ❖ Opportunities for continuing professional development
- ❖ Investment in leadership
- ❖ Support for national framework implementation

*“There are so many elements that make up a high quality service; happy staff, well qualified staff, a service that promotes professional development, good communication with parents, a relaxed calm environment, low ratios, a good manager, the list goes on... but you need all of these things to be at play – there’s no use in one or two. You’ll know a high quality service as soon as you walk in the door – the children are happy, they love being there, the staff are happy and they love being there – there is a certain atmosphere and you just know”.*



# For Further Details on the Evaluation



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**Thank you to all involved in the Tallaght NEYAI Programme**