



The Nurture Programme



Infant Health & Wellbeing



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

ensuring that parents are
at the heart of our work



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– Infant Health & Wellbeing

About 70,000 babies are born in Ireland every year – that’s 192 every day or one baby every 7½ minutes. All parents want what’s best for their child, and new parents in particular need support from everyone around them to achieve that.

[The Nurture Programme](#) – Infant Health and Wellbeing is being established with these babies and their parents at its heart. Our aim is to do our part to help give each one of these babies the best start in life.

From pregnancy through to the child’s third birthday, parents can meet a healthcare professional at least 25 times at antenatal/postnatal and child health visits. The relationship between our healthcare professionals and parents is the focus of The Nurture Programme. In other words we want to make every contact count.

The aim of The Nurture Programme is to support parents and healthcare professionals in their caring and service provision roles.

What is The Nurture Programme?

It's a new programme of work designed to improve the information and professional supports that we provide to parents during pregnancy and the first three years of their baby's life. It's a partnership between the Health Service Executive (HSE), the Atlantic Philanthropies, the Katharine Howard Foundation (KHF) and the Centre for Effective Services.

Why are these early years so important?

National and international research shows time and again that what happens to a child during pregnancy and the first three years of life will influence the child's health and wellbeing for their lifetime. By providing high-quality care and information at an early stage, we can support parents in their caring role and, in turn, help to ensure children attain lifelong improved health and wellbeing.

Why invest in the first three years of a child's life?

Early intervention and prevention create the best possible outcomes for children. It helps children meet their developmental goals and offers them the very best chance of living a happy and fulfilled life. Prevention and early intervention is also the most economical way to help children and families, reducing long-term dependency on a range of state services.



What services will be involved in The Nurture Programme?

Ireland's national child health programme is delivered by maternity services and primary care teams in every community in the State. It includes maternity and infant care, the first visit from the Public Health Nurse after baby comes home, and a supportive schedule of child health reviews, vaccinations and screening provided by General Practitioners, PHNs and Community Medical Officers. This service is free to all children and aspects of these services will be involved in the improvements associated with The Nurture Programme. Our healthcare professionals will be involved and supported with training, development and enhanced information for themselves and for parents.

What difference will The Nurture Programme make?

The Nurture Programme will build on the best practice already in place in our services, and ensure that this practice is delivered consistently across all our services. It will take an evidence-based approach to develop and improve services on an ongoing basis. We will build a universal, consistent, national approach to the delivery of quality services for all infants and their families.

We also commit to ensuring that parents are at the heart of our work, and are involved in the development of the Programme and all its resources. We will identify the information, advice and support that parents need around pregnancy and early years, and how and where they want to get that support. This will be done by taking into account what we learn from consulting parents and reviewing local and international research evidence. We will help parents to understand the journey they will take through the health services – parents will know what they can expect at each stage and will receive clear and consistent messages, advice and support at each step of their journey.



What sort of practical things will we see over the next two to three years as part of The Nurture Programme?

- Development of a new parenting and child health website, for parents and for healthcare staff. This will be the trusted source for all health and wellbeing information that parents, and health care professionals, need.
- Provision of information and advice to people planning to get pregnant so that they can give their child the best start in life.
- Additions to the existing suite of Caring for your Baby and Child books and website, creating a new Healthy Pregnancy book and online content.
- Development of standards for antenatal education and resources to support their delivery.
- Provision of universal access to the Child Safety Awareness Programme to guard against accidental deaths and unintentional injuries to babies and infants.
- Training for practitioners to identify when a parent needs additional support, advice or information and access to effective referral pathways to specialist services when needed.
- Promotion of Infant Mental Health, covering topics like bonding with baby, parent-child communications and supporting baby's early learning and development.
- Support the roll-out of a parent-held child health record.
- Provide additional supports to mothers to breastfeed whenever possible.

What is the long-term plan for The Nurture Programme?

The Nurture Programme will only be a success if the positive changes made possible by the Programme become embedded in services and are sustainable - so every action in the Programme plan will detail a sustainability strategy.

It is important that we learn from the process of implementing The Nurture Programme so that it can inform future developments in services for parents and their children as well as other large scale change processes across the public sector.

An independent evaluation of the Programme has been commissioned which will assess how it was planned and implemented, the extent to which change has occurred at a policy, systems and practice level and the key components which contributed to successful implementation.

Our Guiding Principles

- Parents are the lead partners and experts in the raising of their children - we will engage with them throughout.
- Ensure our work is evidence based, drawing on current and emerging Irish and international research.
- Work collaboratively with statutory agencies and the community and voluntary sector.
- Apply the concepts of Implementation Science to the Programme. This is a growing field of how to manage effective systems change processes in public services.





delivering quality services for all
infants and their families

The Nurture Programme Partner Agencies

The Atlantic Philanthropies:

The Atlantic Philanthropies (Atlantic) is dedicated to bringing about lasting changes in the lives of disadvantaged and vulnerable people. Atlantic is a limited life foundation that will complete grant making in 2016. Over the past decade, Atlantic has initiated a range of investments in the development of services for children and families. These programmes have focused on children in early years services and on communities and groups who experience disadvantage in Ireland. Atlantic is providing a grant to the Katharine Howard Foundation to support the implementation of The Nurture Programme.

Katharine Howard Foundation

The Katharine Howard Foundation (KHF) is an independent foundation focused on improving the lives of young children and their families. The Foundation's work is underpinned by a commitment to equality and overcoming disadvantage and to promoting equality of opportunity for all children. KHF is responsible for managing The Nurture Programme grant.

Health Service Executive

The HSE's 100,000 staff members provide all of Ireland's public health services in hospitals and communities across the country. The HSE's vision is a healthier Ireland with a high quality health service valued by all. The HSE will deliver The Nurture Programme Implementation Plan through its Primary Care, Acute Hospital and Health and Wellbeing Divisions, and in turn through Community Health Care Organisations and Hospital Groups around the country.

The Nurture Programme, which is focused on pregnancy and the first three years of a child's life, fits into a wider HSE National Healthy Childhood Programme, which looks at the whole of childhood up to 18 years. These programmes are developed

within the framework of Healthy Ireland (Department of Health 2013), Better Outcomes Brighter Futures (Department of Children and Youth Affairs 2014), the National Maternity Strategy 2016 – 2026 (Department of Health 2016) and the forthcoming HSE revised Breastfeeding Strategy.

Centre for Effective Services

The Centre for Effective Services (CES) is a not-for-profit, intermediary organisation working on the island of Ireland. CES connects policy, practice and research, helping to ensure the implementation of effective services, to improve the lives of people living across the island of Ireland. CES will deliver implementation support to The Nurture Programme, drawing on the growing field of Implementation Science.

Community Foundation for Ireland

The Community Foundation for Ireland (CFI) believes in the power of philanthropy to deliver just and progressive social change. CFI empowers people who want to make a difference through a model of philanthropy that is based on trust, effectiveness and impact.

CFI will manage the Infant Development Fund, a fund which has been constituted to sustain the work of The Nurture Programme and other related initiatives for a period of at least ten years after the initial funding has been expended.





empowers people who want to
make a difference



The Nurture Programme Implementation Plan 2016-2018

The Implementation Plan will be delivered through six interconnected Implementation Teams:

1. Knowledge and Communications
2. Antenatal to Postnatal
3. Health & Wellbeing Promotion and Improvement
4. Infant Mental Health and Supporting Parents
5. Standardised Health Records for Parents and Professionals
6. Training and Resources

The membership of the implementation teams will include representation from key stakeholders. Team composition may change over time as different phases of the work progress. The work of the teams will be mutually dependent, requiring effective cross team working. The teams will have access to a range of supports to carry out their work.

How can I get involved?

Our implementation teams will be seeking input from all stakeholders. If there are initiatives you'd like to bring to our attention, please let us know by emailing

nurture.programme@hse.ie

Updated information will be provided on
www.hse.ie/nurtureprogramme



The
ATLANTIC
Philanthropies

KHF KATHARINE
HOWARD
FOUNDATION

CES CENTRE FOR EFFECTIVE SERVICES

 **The Community
Foundation for Ireland**