



Welcome & opening address

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National Healthy Childhood Programme





HSE National Child Health Public Health function

mychild.ie





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Our vision

'Children and young people in Ireland will be enabled to live their best, healthiest lives'

Core work streams

Delivering on this vision within the National Child Health Public Health function breaks down to 4 core work streams:

1. Universal child health programme: The National Healthy Childhood Programme (NHCP)
2. Integrated health
3. Government and stakeholder engagement
4. Children's health and wellbeing programmes





Population health for children - Why does it matter?

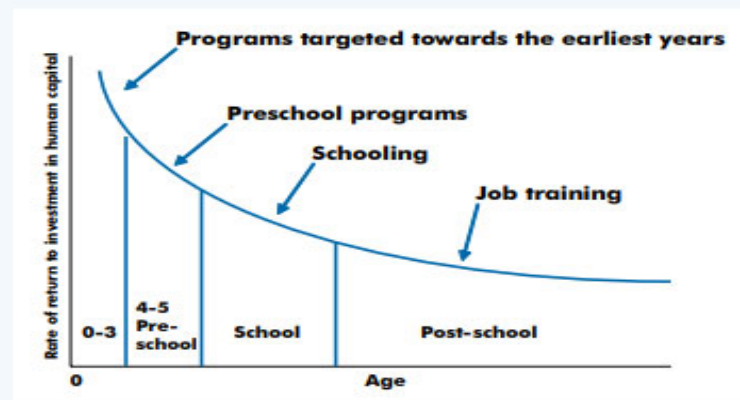
"The foundations for virtually every aspect of human development – physical, intellectual and emotional – are laid in early childhood."

What happens during these early years (starting in the womb) has lifelong effects on many aspects of health and well-being – from obesity, heart disease and mental health to educational achievement and economic status."

Michael Marmot

Figure 1a
Returns to a Unit Dollar Invested

(a) Return to a unit dollar invested at different ages from the perspective of the beginning of life, assuming one dollar initially invested at each age



Give every child the best start in life

Enabling children to have the best possible start in life is essential not only to them but also to healthcare system future sustainability



Children in Ireland

- 25% of the population is <19 years (~54,000 births last year)
- Increasing supports around maternity / parent and parental benefits and childcare
- Increased protection around breastfeeding for mothers
- 21.2% of CYP aged 0-17 years in enforced deprivation, 46.5% in single parent families (CSO, 2025).
- ~4,600 children registered as homeless in Ireland
- Breastfeeding rates low with 31.5% exclusively at 3 months (41% non exclusively)
- 10% CYP live with chronic illness e.g. diabetes, ~33% over-weight and obesity
- ~ 4% (48,000) children have complex ongoing disability needs
- Mental health challenges ever increasing





National Healthy Childhood Programme (NHCP)

Most countries have a 'programme' of what should be 'done' / 'available' to **all children** to support their healthy growth and development.

The NHCP is the HSE's universal programme of clinical care for all children

Of note the child health services (NHCP) is

- *Enshrined in law (Health Acts) as core explicit services for delivery*
- *Enshrined in law that public health have related responsibilities*





Core components of the NHCP

The framework of the NHCP outlines the content and timing of the health care activity incorporated as part of the NHCP.

The NHCP includes newborn screening, PHN core service; Infant feeding/lactation support, IMH, oral health promotion, NIP.

Supporting implementation of the NHCP is a standardised CH record used across the country and accompanying practitioner training and resources

Supporting parents and families the MyChild.ie resources (books, webpages; short guides for conditions etc) underpinned by extensive comms and HSE funded campaigns, are critical supporting component





NHCP data 2024 *(this is provisional data and may change)*

~ **54,400** number of children born

54,319 - no. of initial samples received in the bloodspot screening lab in 2024

149 - number of cases of the nine conditions screened for as part of the NNBS

54,255 babies offered newborn hearing screening. **820** babies referred to audiology (2023 data) **79** babies diagnosed with PCHL

226 - Breastfeeding services (support groups & education classes) listed on MyChild.ie

2,258 contacts with members of the public through the 'Ask our breastfeeding expert' online service

- **1,155** live chats
- **1,103** email queries responded to.

46,995 - *My Child: 0 to 2 years* books distributed

36,417 - *My Child: 2 to 5 years* books distributed

301 mychild.ie pages fact-checked as part of 3 year review process (over 550 pages on MyChild.ie)

5,937,677 - the number of visits to MyChild.ie

- 959,824 more visits than 2023
- 18.8% growth year on year

5,662 staff training across multiple eLearning units and face-to-face training



Children's Screening Programmes

- National Newborn Bloodspot Screening Programme
- National Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Programme

