



Director's welcome

Welcome to the Winter 2010 edition of the Newsletter from the Centre for Effective Services. Since our last Newsletter, CES has been joined by five new team members (see page 2), including senior fellows in Practice Development, and in Research and Evidence, both of whom are based in our Belfast offices. This brings the total number of staff at the Centre to twenty across Ireland and Northern Ireland. The forming of our permanent team in Belfast is especially exciting, and we can now look forward to finding more ways to support the policy, practice and research community in Northern Ireland in times which, as we all know, present many challenges for the children's services field.



The last few months have been remarkably busy for the Centre. We published several substantial reports and reference documents, including a review of the international evidence on what works in community development programmes (see page 2), published jointly with the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs and launched with Minister Pat Carey TD in attendance.

With the help of experts from Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland and the USA our Practice Development team ran a 'road show' of three half-day seminars in Cork, Galway and Dublin on the theme of **Evidence-informed practice: the what, the why, and the how** and we started work on a major project to collate and synthesise learning on 'what

works' from the Prevention and Early Intervention Initiative in Ireland and Northern Ireland funded by Atlantic Philanthropies, and the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs in Ireland (see page 6). This will involve us collaboratively with a wide range of service providers and research teams across the island.

Alongside other partners, CES has also been supporting the development of a major dissemination and knowledge transfer project for the Prevention and Early Intervention Initiative (see page 6).

We also convened two informal 'special interest groups' (on **Supporting parents, and Evidence-informed approaches to working in communities**), and during 2010 we are especially proud to have helped a brand new, all-

island research network to form and launch, designed to connect and serve all those who produce or use child and family research whether for policy, practice or research and evaluation (see page 7).

Finally, as many of you know, I am sad to be stepping down as Chief Executive of the Centre in early 2011. As the founder director it has been an enormous privilege to lead the Centre from start-up to full operations, and I would like to thank our highly supportive funders, our hardworking Board, and my talented colleagues at CES for their huge efforts and enthusiasm over the past two and half years. I wish all of them, and all of our stakeholders, much success in taking forward the next exciting phase of the Centre's evolution.

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• Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs, Pat Carey TD, launches our milestone publication **Effective Community Development Programmes – A review of the international evidence base**. With him are CES Director Dr Deborah Ghaté and Dr John Bamber, Principal Fellow (right). See details on page 2.

inside this issue

- launch of milestone publication
- CES Dublin library opens
- new support for client services
- CES in Northern Ireland
- project news
- CES board update

Milestone publication on effective community development programmes is launched

On 21 September 2010 the Centre was very pleased to welcome the Minister of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs, Pat Carey TD, to formally launch the publication **Effective Community Development Programmes – A review of the international evidence base**. At the launch, the Centre's director Deborah Ghate explained that it is hoped the review will stimulate constructive discussion amongst all stakeholders about how to achieve the best outcomes from community development programmes in Ireland.

The Minister put the publication in context in terms of the general need for publicly funded organisations to focus on effectiveness. He said that the Department would pay particular attention to the review's findings, but that the messages applied more widely across Government.

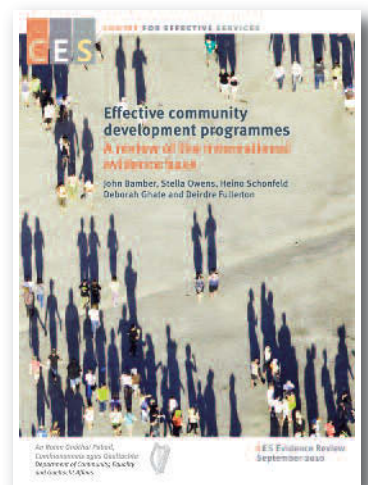
He urged everyone involved in the community sector to come together to focus attention on meeting needs.

The review draws on over 200 Irish and international sources. The focus is on evaluations by independent teams of social science researchers. Taken together they form a good part of the evidence base about effectiveness in the performance of publicly funded community development type programmes.

The review draws some 32 lessons in relation to four main aspects of programme design and delivery: structure and governance, service design and content, implementation and delivery, monitoring and evaluation.

These lessons can be read in the Executive Summary of the Review and the Technical Report. Both are available on the CES website.

- Order copies of **Effective Community Development Programmes – A review of the international evidence base** from office@effectiveservices.org quoting P001. For further information please contact John Bamber jbamber@effectiveservices.org



Introducing new CES staff members

Dr. Helga Sneddon

Senior Fellow, Research and Evidence (Belfast Office)

Prior to joining CES, Helga was Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Child Care Research at Queens University, Belfast. Her main interest is in the evaluation of child and adolescent development, care and well-being. Recent work includes a systematic review of the effectiveness of psychological interventions for young offenders, studies of parenting and child development, and outcomes for young people in care. She is expert in qualitative and quantitative research methods, including randomised control trials, and has recently been co-leading the Northern Ireland evaluation of Lifestart.

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Avery Bowser

Senior Fellow, Practice Development (Belfast Office)

Avery was an Assistant Director with the NSPCC in Northern Ireland and has been a social work practitioner and manager, with particular experience in child protection, the criminal justice system and therapeutic services for children. He set up and led the development of young witness support services in Northern Ireland and led the development of Achieving Best Evidence and Pre-trial Therapy Guidance for Northern Ireland. Avery was a member of the Northern Ireland Civic Forum representing the voluntary and community sector.

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Michelle Harris

Fellow, Practice Development (Belfast Office)

Michelle joins us from Barnardos Northern Ireland 'Safe Choices' initiative where she has focused on evidence-based approaches with clients

and has developed relationships with external agencies. She has worked in the area of child and family services, including child protection, children in care and leaving care. She has extensive experience in front line practice in youth justice, community development and probation in statutory and non-statutory sectors and holds an MSc in Criminology and Criminal Justice.

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Mary Roche

Practice Development on Secondment from the Health Service Executive (Dublin Office)

Based in the HSE in the North West, Mary has worked in social work practice and health promotion. More recently she has been managing a number of projects in the Children and Young People's Team around

adolescent health and child safety. During her secondment she will be working on a number of practice development projects. She is also studying for a PhD in Queens University Belfast.

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Kate Morris

Knowledge and Communications Executive (Dublin Office)

Kate has a background in strategic communication, policy and knowledge management and has worked with a number of cross-border organisations including the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism, Educate Together, and with the French National Institute for Demographic Studies. Kate will be working with Claire Mac Evilly, Principal Fellow, on Knowledge and Communications activities.

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Evidence-informed policy making in Northern Ireland

From its inception, CES has been active in Northern Ireland and Ireland. We were founded on a belief that evidence-informed policy and practice and 'what works' will have resonance, and will lead to a two-way exchange of complementary and transferable learning between the jurisdictions. While we recognise the similarities and shared concerns, we also understand that there will be clear differences of context and application.

At a strategic and service level Northern Ireland has substantial experience in utilising evidence-informed approaches through the work of Government, universities, service providers (both statutory and voluntary), professional organisations and UK-wide initiatives to promote best practice based on 'what works'. Equally, work in Ireland has the potential to contribute to learning in Northern Ireland. A good example is CES support to the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs in relation to interagency Children's Services Committees. The Northern Ireland experience of Children's Services Planning has a lot to offer in terms of transferable learning, and while Children's Services Planning itself is in transition, the work done to date in Ireland may complement further development in Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland has a strong and vibrant voluntary and community sector which has developed over several decades in very specific social and political circumstances. The context for community development in Ireland is very different but it is likely that there will be an opportunity for learning in both directions from our work with the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs on the Local and Community Development Programme.

In a period of extreme pressure on the public finances, service providers and commissioners, North and South, will be faced with an increasing need to provide evidence of the effectiveness of services. As in Ireland, in Northern Ireland CES intends to add to and complement the existing capacity in relation to evidence-informed policy and practice. We look forward to new relationships and shared learning as our work in Northern Ireland accelerates in 2011. Contact our Belfast office at nioffice@effectiveservices.org

CES library – supporting knowledge and learning

The CES library at our Harcourt Street offices is a unique resource for those working with children, families and communities. The holdings reflect past, present and emerging multi-disciplinary research into policy and practice for improving outcomes for children, families and communities in which they live.

The library's primary role is to support the information needs and activities of CES staff, but it is also open to visitors. The library holds

journals, books, reports and intervention manuals and programmes covering a range of topics relevant to all those working in practice, policy and research and are all available for reference by visitors.

The library is open to visitors between 9.30am-1pm, Monday-Friday when the Librarian is present, and at other times by appointment. Access is free of charge, but please be sure to contact the library before visiting library@effectiveservices.org or call 01 4160500



Library subject areas

- child and adolescent mental health and development
- child and adolescent physical health and development
- child protection and welfare • child rights, advocacy and participation • community development • disability
- diversity • early childhood care and education
- education (school or community based) • housing
- organisational development • parenting and family support • poverty • substance use • youth and youth development • youth justice and anti social behaviour
- knowledge transfer and dissemination • research and evaluation methods • results based accountability
- service implementation and delivery

Supporting client services in 2011

During 2011 the Centre will be rolling out a number of ways of supporting our stakeholders in service-providing organisations, based on various tools and methods that we have been developing and testing during 2010. We plan to offer two forms of support and technical assistance to selected services from early 2011:

1 Facilitated support – using the **What Works Process**, a comprehensive, multi-dimensional review of the extent to which a service is currently working in evidence-informed ways, and designed to help you achieve the best outcomes for your beneficiaries. The process involves an interactive review with key personnel and stakeholders in your organisation, using the **What Works Tool** and facilitated by trained CES associates. The results of the review are fed into a **needs analysis** for your service, which we review jointly. Our team will then work in partnership with you to identify ways of meeting those needs. The whole process is designed to help you to benchmark current performance against principles of ‘what works’, identify your strengths, plan for improvements in key areas, and take actions to achieve improvements.

2 Lighter-touch support and advice – a way to access other tools that we have developed, or get time-limited support from CES’s professional staff to meet specific needs in particular areas of your work. Our lighter-touch support services presently include:

- **A tailored workshop on evidence-informed approaches to programme or service design**

This workshop lasts one day, plus preparatory planning sessions, with key staff or stakeholders within a single agency. The workshop is developed in partnership with CES staff to tailor the content to your needs. Topics covered can include: reviewing and using evidence to underpin your service; tools and approaches for service or programme design (including building a ‘theory of change’, and logic modelling for clearer outcomes); developing and costing an evaluation strategy; and an introduction to monitoring and evaluation methods.

- **Guided support for strategy and programme development**

A series of up to six half-day sessions with members of CES’s professional staff, covering specific issues relevant to the development of your service or for the purpose of developing strategy. Assistance may be provided on a range of subjects: organisational development and change management; identifying and clarifying goals; exploring barriers and enabling factors to effective delivery; setting up and sustaining an effective partnership or Board; and commissioning and managing research and evaluation.

- **Seminars and training sessions for staff development**

Our team will be offering a range of seminars or training sessions to help your staff better understand and use an evidence-informed approach to their work. Topics include:

- a scientific approach to intervention – what is it and why it is important?
- prevention and resilience – understanding key concepts
- early intervention – why do it, how to do it
- evidence and evaluation – an introduction

- **Knowledge digests for practice and policy development**

Want to get an update on the latest research evidence in a particular area to help you think about service development? Our staff in Knowledge Management and Research and Evidence can point you in the direction of relevant reading, or put together short, accessible summaries and digests on topics of relevance to your service.

CES will be gearing up to provide these and other services to a wider group of stakeholders in 2011 – watch this space, and www.effectiveservices.org for details.

Update on the CES diagnostic process

We are currently completing pilot-testing of the CES diagnostic process (now called the What Works Process) and its components in three volunteer sites in Ireland and Northern Ireland. The results have been analysed and are being used to inform the development of Version One, which will be launched on 26 January 2011 in Dublin and on 27 January in Belfast. Initial feedback has been positive from the three sites, each of whom are at varying stages in the development of their own programmes. We also got lots of useful information to help us make the process and tools as helpful and user-friendly as possible. For further information on the process, please contact Dr Sean Denyer, Principal Fellow, Practice Development sdenyer@effectiveservices.org

The what, why and how for senior policy makers

CES plans to host a range of seminars and other learning events exploring the concept and application of evidence in policy and practice. The first CES seminar for senior policy makers in Ireland was held in June 2010, on the theme of **Developing evidence-informed policy for children, families and communities – making and implementing policy at national and local level**. The intention was to begin a focused and productive dialogue about how to achieve policy that is rooted in solid knowledge of what works, and which is also feasible, practical, sustainable and affordable.

The seminar offered an overview of the landscape relevant to evidence-informed policy and included contributions from two senior UK policy advisors in children's services and Dr Karen Blase, Co-Director of federally-funded National Implementation Research Network, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina. It was targeted at senior officials involved in policy making at the highest levels, across a range of Government Departments. Sixteen Secretary Generals, Assistant Secretaries and Principal Officers from seven Government Departments attended.

Further seminars for the same group of senior policy makers are planned for next year. The second seminar, in February 2011, will address why and how to use social and economic evidence in policy for children and families. The third will focus on the challenges of implementing evidence-informed policy, and the final seminar will explore issues around evaluating the impact of evidence-informed policy. For further information please contact Katie Burke kburke@effectiveservices.org

- Professor Daniel Perkins from the Prevention Research Center at Penn State University was among 'road show' speakers in Dublin, Cork and Galway.

Practice development hits the road

The Centre is hosting a range of seminars exploring the application of evidence-informed approach to practice improvement. The aim is to provide:

- opportunities for practitioners and managers of children, young people and family services, and other stakeholders in Ireland and Northern Ireland, to engage and learn with world class practitioners, managers and researchers from Ireland and elsewhere
- networking and peer learning opportunities for practitioners and managers working with children and young people
- training in approaches, skills and techniques, which will enhance the effectiveness of services or programmes being delivered to children, young people and families
- an opportunity for practitioners and others to inform CES of their development needs.

The first seminar was in the form of a travelling 'road show' in Dublin, Cork and Galway in October. Sandra Nutley, Professor of Public Management, University of Edinburgh, addressed key questions concerning the meaning of evidence, the types of knowledge involved and the role of research and evidence in different policy areas. Daniel Perkins, Professor of Family and Youth Resiliency and Policy at the Prevention Research Center, Penn State University, described the benefits of evidence-informed approaches, highlighting some of the challenges in implementation. The two parallel workshops were led by Marian Quinn, Chief Executive Officer, CDI Tallaght, and Noel Kelly, Manager, Preparing for Life, Northside Partnership. In addition, each seminar featured two 'discussants' who gave feedback on the event and responded to the keynote presentations and the content of the workshops. Slides from the keynote presentation, and the papers by Sandra Nutley and Daniel Perkins are on the CES website.

The second seminar in the series will be held in Cork, Belfast and Dublin between the 8-10 February 2011 and will focus on tools for service and programme planning and design, especially the use of 'logic modelling'. For further information about the series contact Dr John Bamber jbamber@effectiveservices.org



‘Capturing the Learning’ on prevention

Over the past few years, The Atlantic Philanthropies have been funding an initiative to promote prevention and early intervention for children and young people in Ireland and Northern Ireland. This has involved investing, sometimes jointly with Government, in organisations that have developed and delivered services based on evidence of what works. The initiative supports services in areas such as early childhood, sexual health, literacy, social and emotional learning, crime and violence prevention, youth mentoring and parenting support.

As part of this initiative, many of the services have taken part in independent evaluation studies using mixed qualitative and quantitative methodologies. These have explored process and implementation, and measured outcomes using robust approaches such as randomised controlled trials. During the next three years, the services and research teams will individually publish results from their evaluations. In addition, there is exciting potential for the findings to be pulled together to provide a strong evidence-base to inform future early intervention and prevention policy and practice for young people across the island of Ireland, and elsewhere. As part of this process, CES will produce an independent overview which synthesises the results and summarises the collective, overarching learning from the initiative as a whole. By capturing data from a range of sources, the intention is to provide an analysis of both explicit and implicit learning in areas such as:

- the outcomes and wider impact of the initiative
- the process and implementation/delivery issues
- issues in commissioning and support for services
- issues relevant to research development strategies for initiatives of this kind.

This should add considerable force to the conclusions drawn by individual studies and help ensure that maximum value is extracted from the investment that has been made. The project will identify some of the key messages that will feed into a programme-wide ‘Dissemination Initiative on Prevention and Early Intervention’ (DIPEI), whose partners include The Atlantic Philanthropies, the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs and the National Children’s Bureau in Northern Ireland (see below). For further information contact Dr Helga Sneddon hsneddon@effectiveservices.org

Disseminating the captured learning

Running in parallel with the capturing of the learning project, is a major investment in dissemination and knowledge transfer for the Prevention and Early Intervention Initiative (DIPEI). In Ireland it involves four key stakeholders – The Atlantic Philanthropies, Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, The Atlantic Philanthropies’ grantees and the Centre for Effective Services. The process will operate until 2012 with the support and facilitation of the National Children’s Bureau (NCB) in Northern Ireland and Prospectus Strategy Consultants in Ireland. The objectives of the Dissemination Initiative on Prevention and Early Intervention are to:

- consider the collated learnings and messages from programmes and projects and translate them into meaningful, refined messages that are pertinent to all relevant audiences
- promote the added value of capturing and considering the evaluation learnings in a structured and collaborative fashion
- to be a mechanism for reaching and engaging with the relevant audiences
- build a platform to sustain the dissemination of the messages beyond 2012.

Key features of successful dissemination strategies include tailoring the approaches to the audiences, paying attention to the sources of the message and enabling active discussion of research findings. DIPEI is a mechanism for enabling partners to work together and will provide a forum to discuss the individual and collective learning from initiatives, and develop and disseminate key messages to relevant audiences. For more on DIPEI please contact Claire Mac Evilly cmacevilly@effectiveservices.org

Developing ideas and sharing learning

One of the Centre's overarching aims is to promote collaborative and joined up working at a strategic level across the children's sector. A particular objective within this broad aim is to promote the sharing of good practice and learning, by setting up structures for networking around specific issues, and brokering relationships between professionals locally and internationally. In line with this objective, the Centre has begun to work with like-minded individuals in Ireland and Northern Ireland to create a space for developing thinking about key issues in research, policy and practice.

The Centre is currently providing a hosting function for two thematic special interest groups – one on Supporting Parents, and the other on **Evidence- Informed Work With People in Communities**. The groups include practitioners, programme managers, researchers, policy and decision makers, all of whom are interested in developing ideas and sharing learning on evidence-based practice.

The group aims to:

- share information, interests and concerns
- share knowledge and resources
- raise awareness about innovations in practice
- critically analyse leading research
- consider the evidence and knowledge base that informs development in the field
- stimulate thinking and inspire participants.

Participation in the groups should lead to other connections, such as participants contacting each other outside of meetings, or working together on areas of mutual interest.

For more information about the **Supporting Parents** special interest groups, contact Stella Owens sowens@effectiveservices.org For further information about the **Evidence- Informed Work With People in Communities** special interest group, contact Dr John Bamber jbamber@effectiveservices.org

Helping researchers to improve young lives

Late in 2009, CES was asked by two research networks in Ireland and Northern Ireland to assist them with re-launching the existing bodies as a combined network, to create an independent multi-disciplinary knowledge network of people working in the area of research on children, young people and families in Ireland and Northern Ireland. After a year of planning by a specially convened Steering Group, comprised of researchers and research leaders from university, voluntary and independent organisations and government in Ireland and Northern Ireland, CES is proud to announce that The Children's Research Network for Ireland and Northern Ireland was launched on 9 December by Emily Logan, Ombudsman for Children, at the School of Nursing and Midwifery, Trinity College Dublin. The Network has secured funding for 2011 from two partners, the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA) in Ireland, and the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) in Northern Ireland. The Network is also in discussion about possible further sources of funding.

The launch was attended by researchers and research consumers from a range of disciplines and sectors. It featured presentations on **How children's research has influenced the policy agenda in Ireland and in Northern Ireland in the past 20 years** by a panel of research leaders from both jurisdictions including Professors Sheila Greene, Trinity College Dublin and Pat Dolan, National University of Ireland Galway, and Dr Tony Cassidy, University of Ulster. The event was webcast live and can be viewed on the Network website www.childrensresearchnetwork.org

Membership of the Network is open to anyone who has an interest in research to better understand and improve the lives of children and young people. Details of how to join can be found on the Network's website. The site also has a members' area with discussion forum facilities and will provide members with access to the latest research in the children's field, newsletters and details of Network training and events.



A special message from the Chair of the CES Board

'She has turned the Centre from an exciting idea into a firm reality'

You may already be aware that our founding CEO and Director, Dr Deborah Ghate has, with great regret, decided to stand down at the end of 2010. The Board, with great reluctance, has accepted Deborah's decision. Deborah has agreed to continue to support the organisation into the first half of 2011 as we transition to a new CEO.

Deborah joined the Centre as its first employee in summer 2008 and in the past two and half years has worked extraordinarily hard, alongside a growing team of talented colleagues, to turn the Centre from an exciting idea into a firm reality.

In that time, we have gone from our beginnings in a temporary office in the National College of Ireland to fully equipped offices in both Dublin and Belfast; a multi-disciplinary team of around 20 staff, secondees and associates across both jurisdictions; and put in place an extremely busy programme of work combining large-scale strategic projects on issues of national policy and practice relevance, working alongside



an increasingly large group of service-providing organisations.

Many of you will have seen our most recent publications or attended one of our events. At CES we are very proud of the strides the Centre has taken in this time, and we feel Deborah is leaving us with a strong foundation from which to continue our next stage of development. We are actively recruiting Deborah's successor and will update you in due course.

Dan Flinter
Chair of the CES Board

Champions of our mission in Ireland and Northern Ireland

The mission of The Centre for Effective Services is to connect the design and delivery of services with scientific and technical knowledge of what works, in order to improve outcomes for children and young people and the families and communities in which they live. Our daily work is to provide technical and organisational expertise to support the design, implementation and ongoing review and development of evidence-informed services for children, youth and families. Our aims are:

- to promote and support the application of an evidence-informed approach to policy and practice in child, family and community services
- to promote the development of collaborative, joined up working that is outcomes-focused across research, policy and service providing organisations
- to build capacity within Ireland and Northern Ireland to take this work forward in the longer term by developing knowledge, skills and competencies.

The Centre for Effective Services has been developed by champions of evidence informed policy and research across Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Our Board members are: **Dan Flinter** (CES Chair, Business Strategist, non executive director of a number of companies and former CEO of Enterprise Ireland); **Owen Keenan** (Founder and Managing Director of Middlequarter Limited and Former CEO of Barnardos Ireland); **Ruth Lavery** (Barrister and Chair of Social Security and Mental Health Review Tribunals in Northern Ireland); **Mary Walsh** (Chartered Accountant); **Dominic Burke** (Social Worker, former Chief Executive of the Western Health and Social Services Board for Northern Ireland).

CES Granted Charitable Status

The Board are happy to announce that the Centre for Effective Services has been granted charitable status in Ireland and we now have a Charity number: CHY number 19438.

CES is an independent, not-for-profit organisation funded jointly by The Atlantic Philanthropies (AP), the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA), and the Department for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs.



Dates for your 2011 diary

- Launch of CES What Works Process: 26 January (Dublin)
27 January (Belfast)
- Practice Development Seminar:
8 February (Cork), 9 February (Belfast)
10 February (Dublin)