Working Towards a Shared Understanding
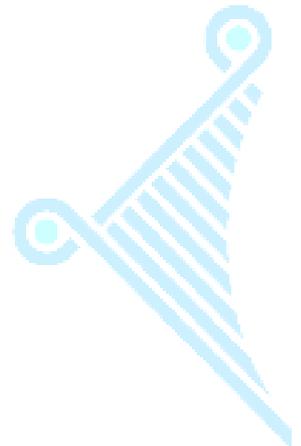
Effective Prevention and Early Intervention Approaches in Human Services

Prevention & Early Intervention Network
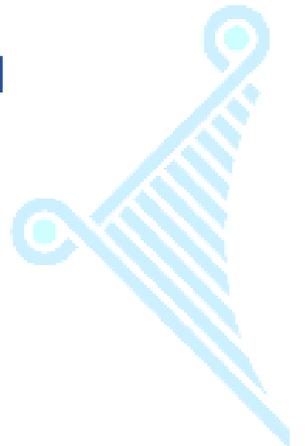
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Starting Point

To manage public expenditure at more sustainable levels in a planned, rational and balanced manner in support of Ireland's economic development and social progress
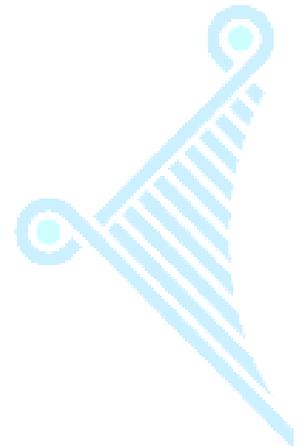
A Guiding Idiom

Prevention

Capacity for controlled government intervention in social life

is

better than

cure

Scientific understanding of cause and effect and possibility of prediction

Purpose

"Dialogue": engage with the issues by engaging with each other.

An opportunity for cross-sectoral sharing of the deep and broad experience of and expertise in prevention and early interventions in Ireland.

Develop a shared understanding of prevention and early interventions in Ireland and support the future development and implementation of effective policies.
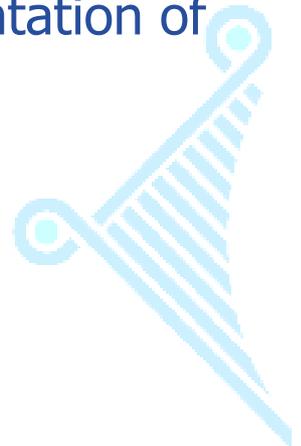
Structure

PART I

Everybody participating was assigned to one of 20 "pods" (groups of three people).

Each "pod" discussed the three core questions:

- What is meant by "prevention" and "early intervention"?
- How do we know if prevention and early interventions work?
- How can this information be used to inform decision-makers?

PART II

Everybody participating in the dialogue was assigned to one of 6 discussion groups of ten people.

Each of these groups focused on one of the three core questions.

Each group had a facilitator who supported the discussion and two officials who listened to the discussion and recorded a summary of what was said on a non-attributable basis.
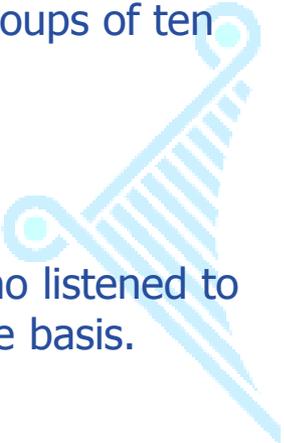
Listening

What is it?

"prevention is better than cure"

Anticipate a problem emerging – build protective factors or minimise risk

Target those at high risk or showing early signs – strengthen protective factors and reduce impact of risk factors

Key features:

- Focus on the outcomes for the individual

- Theory driven

- Evidence of effectiveness

- Ongoing monitoring

What do you mean by prevention and early intervention in your day-to-day work?

Are the key features relevant to your work?
Are there other important features that ought to be included?

Why is it important that policy-makers should support prevention and early interventions?
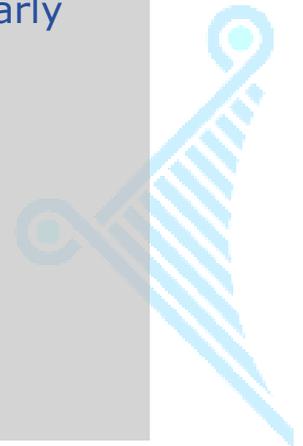
Listening

Does it work?

Rigorously conducted evaluation:

- Randomised control trials
- Quasi-experimental design

Statistically significant results:

- Effectiveness – 2 or more high quality evaluations
- Efficacy – at least 1 high quality evaluation

In context of your day-to-day work, what do you mean by "effectiveness"? How relevant is this concept to your day-to-day work?

"Commitment to a programme manual, ignoring practitioner's experience and expertise."
Is this a problem for you? What have you done to address this problem?

"Stop testing and get on with implementing what we know"
What are your thoughts on this point of view?

Listening

Evidence into policy-making?

Communicating research and evidence into the decision making process

- Evidence into the budget process

- Transitioning from a pilot phase to more general implementation

How does evidence inform your work?

What experience have you had of communicating evidence to policy makers?
What has worked?
What didn't go quite so well?

What are the main issues that need to be addressed in trying to scale-up an intervention?
What factors are likely to support such an effort?
What factors are likely to prove a hindrance?

Tentative Understanding

	Scientific Understanding		Capacity	
		Ideas	*Institutions*	*Interests*
What is it?	Knowledge Outcome Understand Explain Continue	Normative and economic justifications	Holistic Government Localism	Competition / Redistribution of resources
Does it work?	Purposeful Scientific method	Culture Critical Thinking	Utilising evidence Policy context	Inertia
Evidence into policy?	Foundations of decision making Scaling-up	Learning	Short-term	Urgency Influencing