

Informing Policy through Research and Evidence

Examples from the Prevention and Early Intervention Initiative and Growing Up In Ireland



An Roinn Leanaí
agus Gnóthaí Óige
Department of
Children and Youth Affairs



**TRINITY
COLLEGE
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The
ATLANTIC
Philanthropies



Parenting: Insights from
Growing Up in Ireland
and Prevention and Early
Intervention Initiative

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Objectives

- Considering the potential of the collective data from ***Growing Up in Ireland*** (GUI) and the Prevention and Early Intervention Initiative (PEII) in the areas of:
 - Parenting
 - Learning
- Consider the implications from the investment (s) for policy development
- Enhance and develop the dialogue between research output and practice with a consideration of how the information from ***GUI*** and PEII could assist:
 - (a) policy
 - (b) the design and delivery of child and family services
- Hopefully discussion will stimulate the process to further the engagement of researchers, policy makers and practitioners

Why is Supporting Parents Important?

Children of **depressed mothers** are more likely to show poorer cognitive, social, behavioural & psychological outcomes

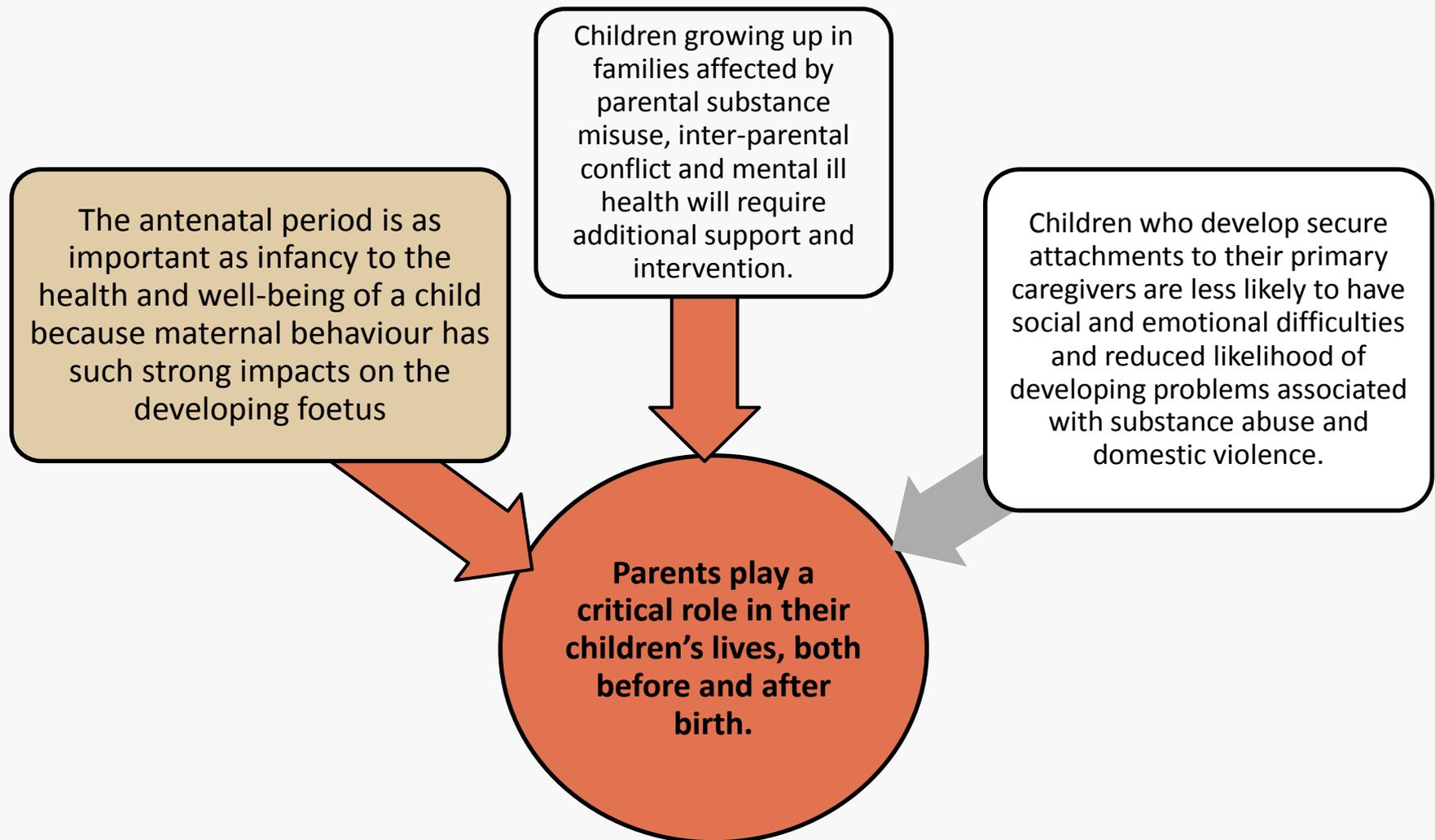
Studies of **paternal depression** show similar effects

Poor maternal diet before & during pregnancy can increase the risk of congenital defects, pre-term delivery & pre-eclampsia amongst others

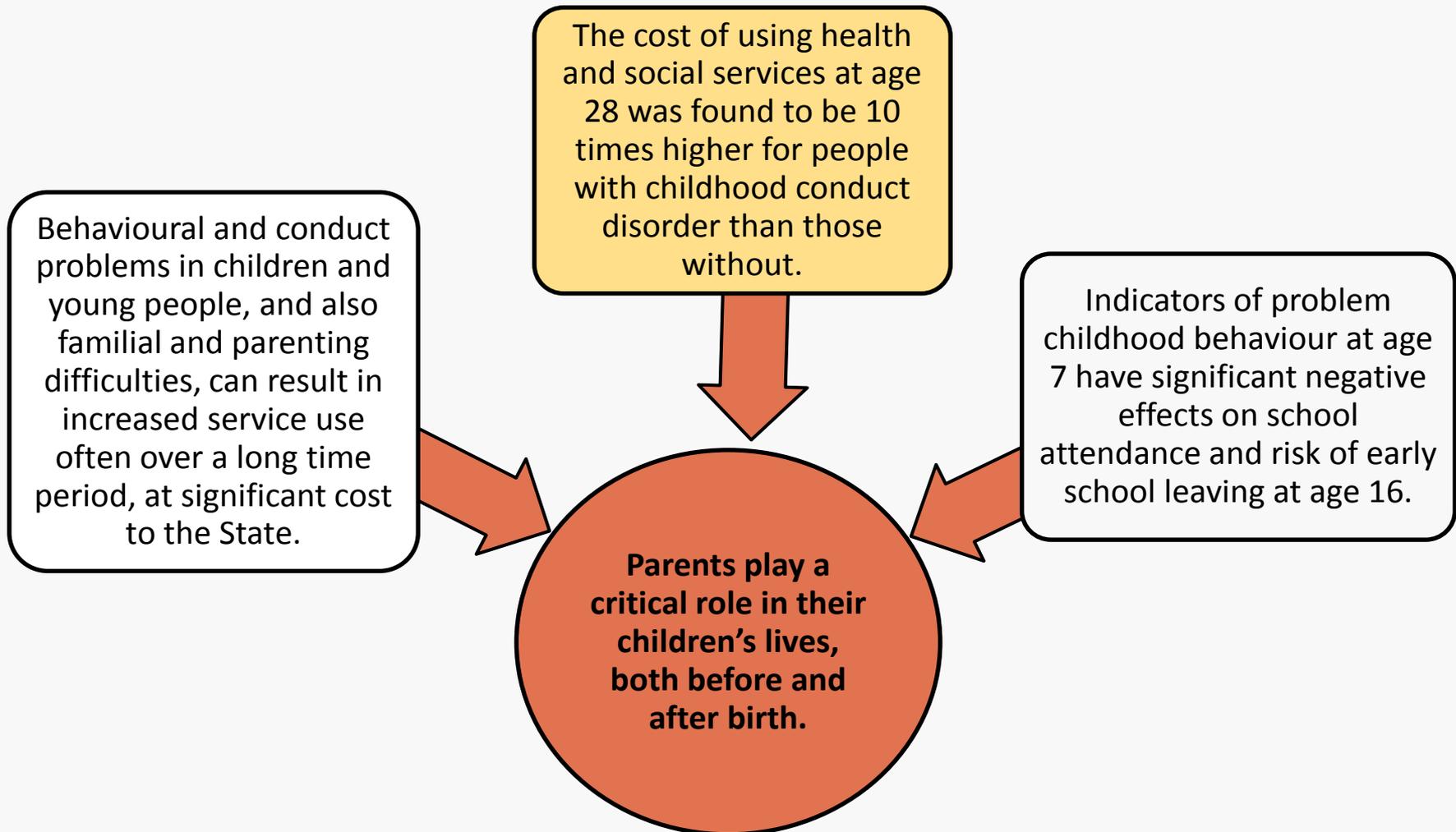
Parents in **poverty** are at increased risk of mental health problems & their parenting behaviours are less stimulating & more punitive

Parents play a critical role in their children's lives, both before and after birth.

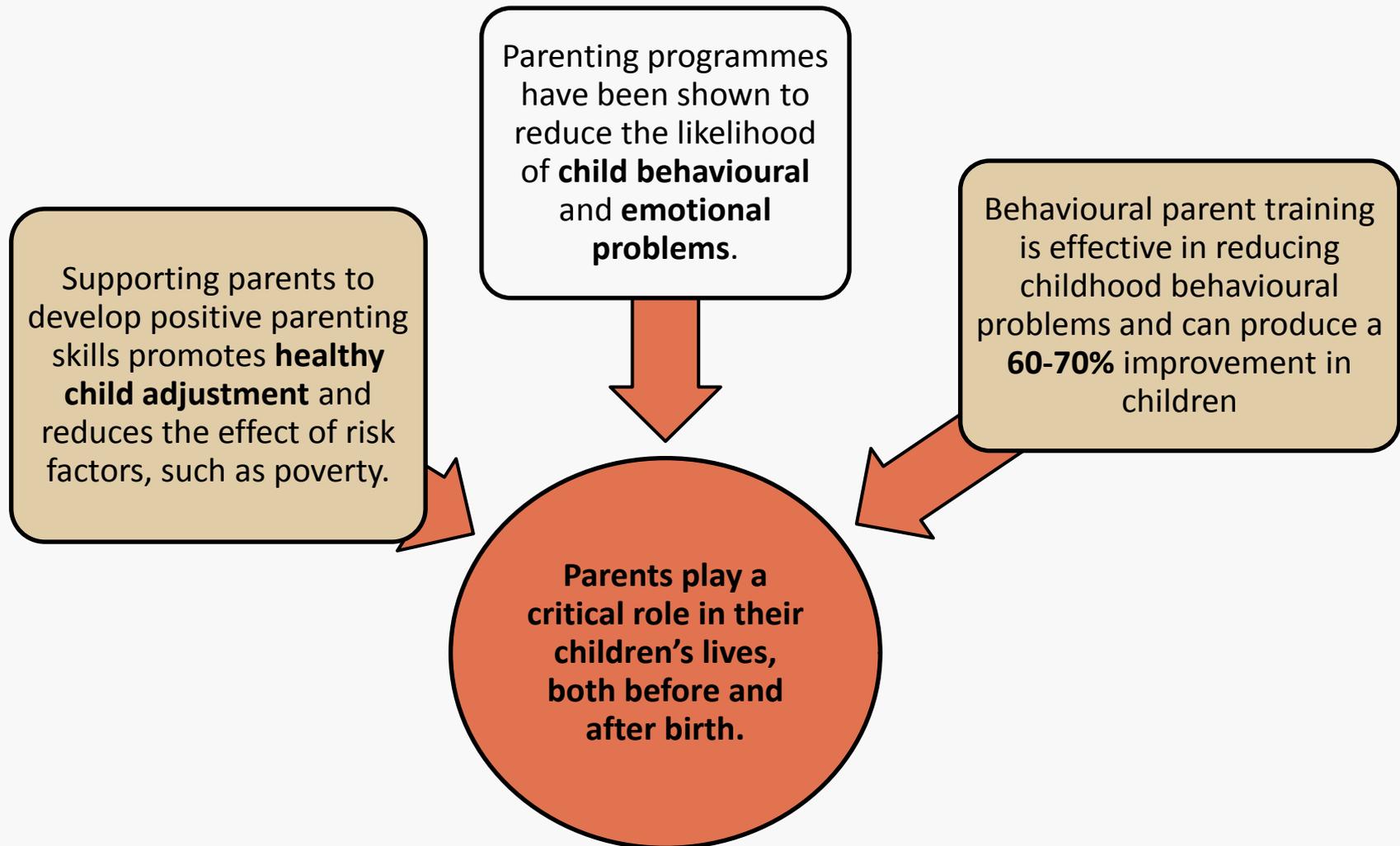
Why is Supporting Parents Important?



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Why is Supporting Parents Important?



Background and Objectives of *Growing up in Ireland*

- study the lives of children and young people in Ireland
- establish what is typical and normal as well as atypical and problematic
- to identify the key factors that most help or hinder children's development
- very strong policy focus – evidence-informed policy and practice.
- developing part of the research infrastructure for all stakeholders involved in children and young people

Background and Objectives of *Growing up in Ireland*

- wholly funded by Department of Children and Youth Affairs in association with the Department of Social Protection and the Central Statistics Office
- being carried out by a consortium of researchers led by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and Trinity College

Growing up in Ireland

- Two cohorts of children
 - “Infant Cohort”:
 - 11,134 **9-month-olds** and their families
 - 9,800 **3-year-olds** and their families
 - 9,100 **5-year-olds** and their families and teachers being interviewed from March-September 2013
 - “Child Cohort”:
 - 8,568 **9-year-olds** and their families and teachers
 - 7,700 **13-year-olds** and their families and school Principal
- Very large, nationally representative statistical samples

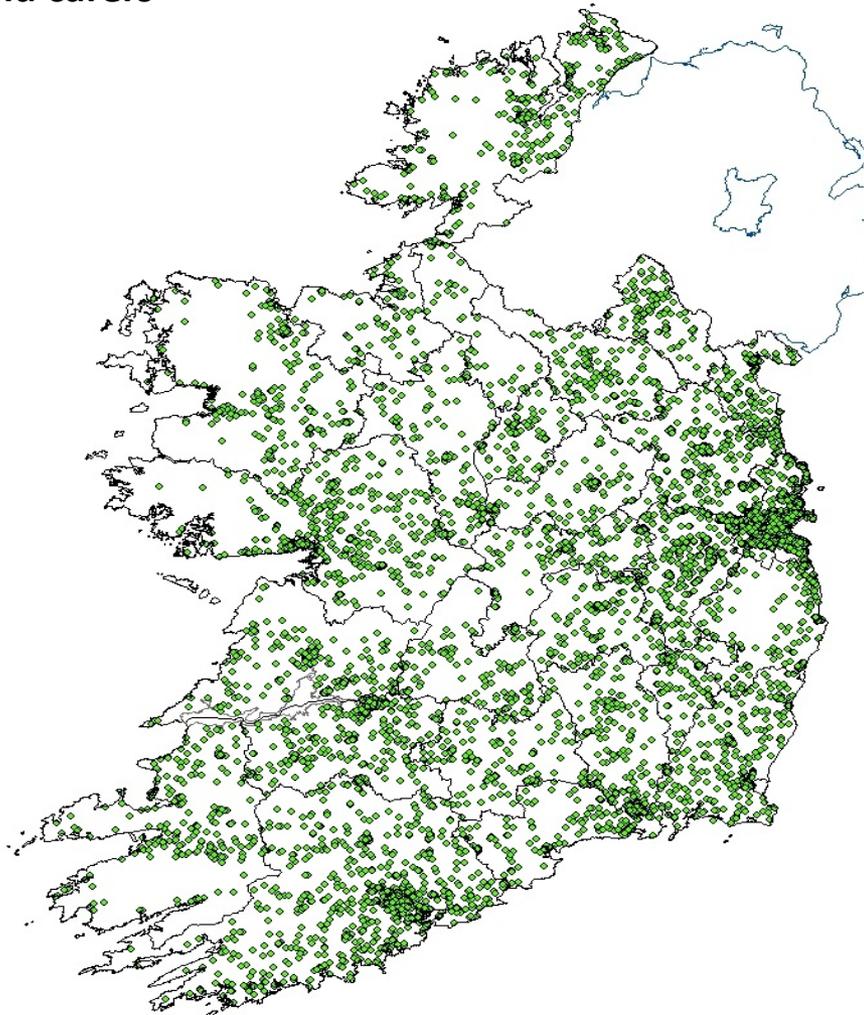


Growing up in Ireland



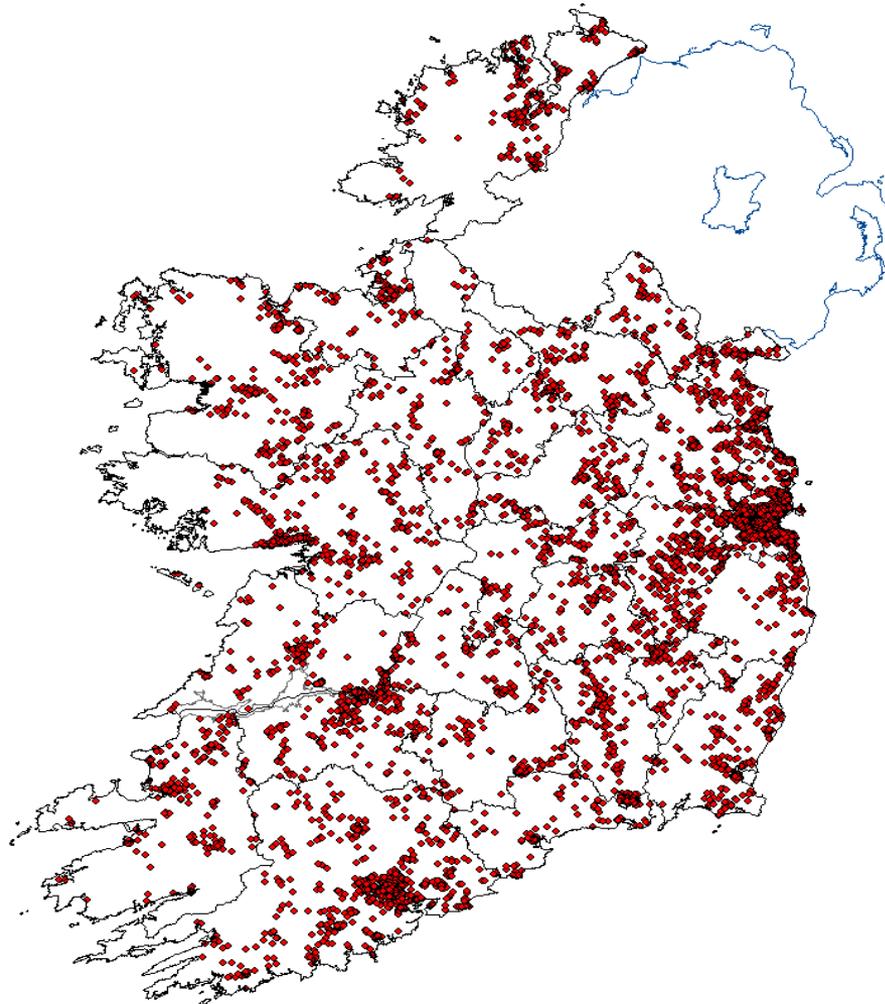
Infant Cohort, at 9 months

National sample of 11,134 9-month-olds, their families and carers

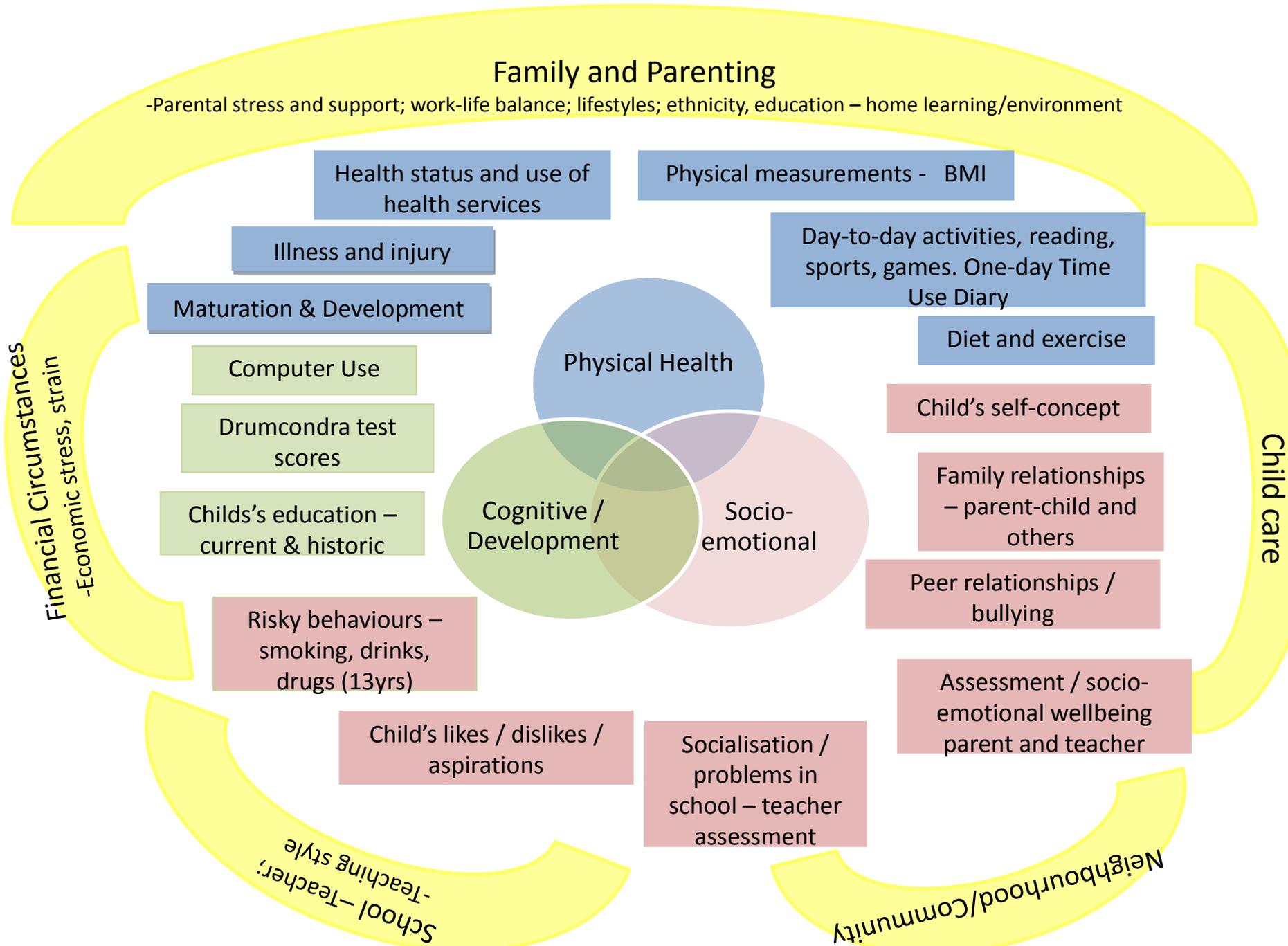


Child Cohort, at 9 years

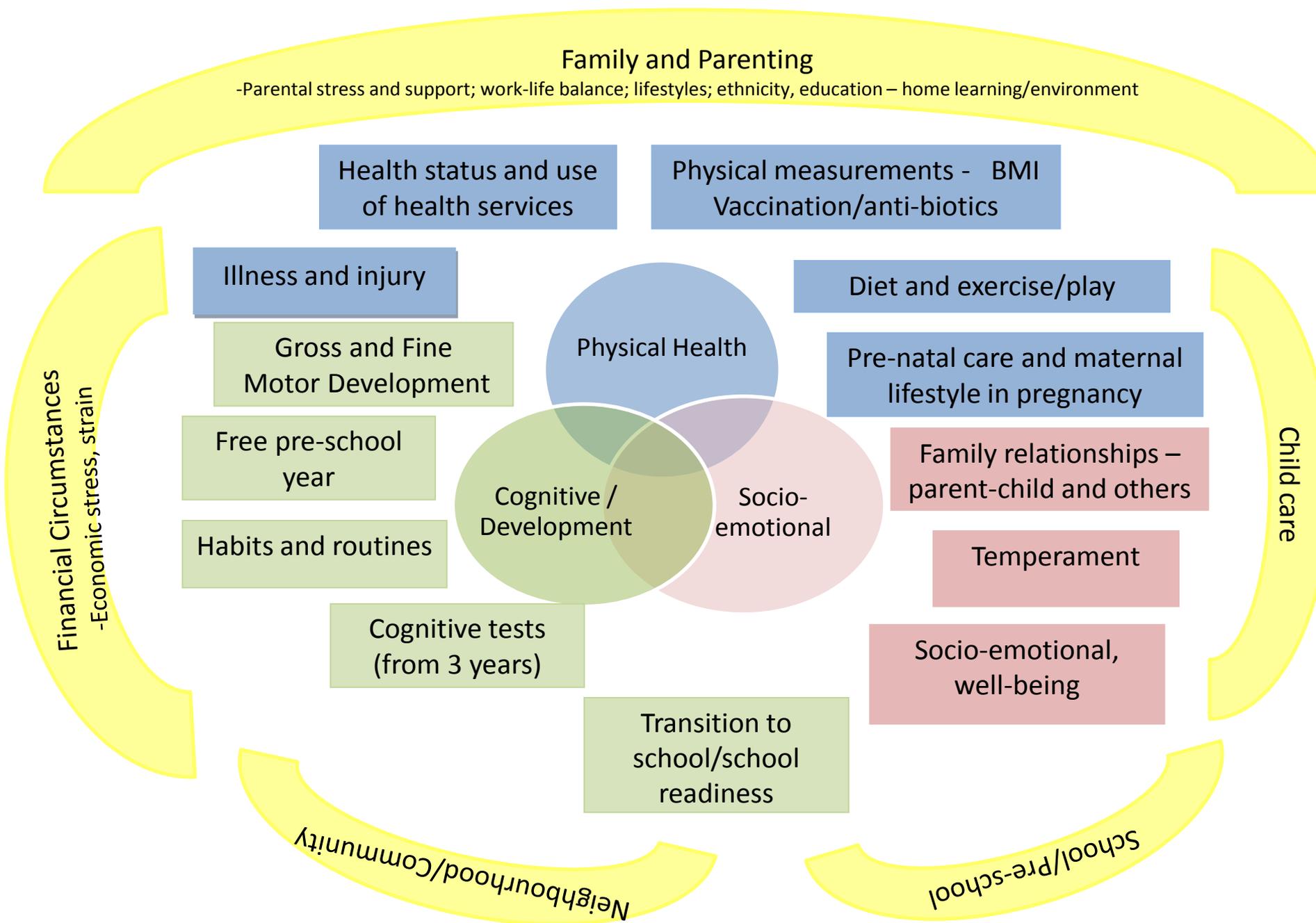
National sample of 8,568 9-year-olds, their parents, carers, teachers, Principals



CHILD COHORT – 9 Yrs / 13 Yrs



INFANT COHORT – 9 Mths / 3Yrs / 5Yrs



Strengths of *Growing Up in Ireland* for Policy & Practice

- Very large statistical samples
 - Generalisable to the population of children and young people
 - Drill down to subgroups of children and young people
 - Variance across subgroups of children and young people
- Very comprehensive, in terms of topics covered
 - Cover all aspects of child's life – outcomes and context
 - Cross domain analysis
 - Relate to all policy areas

Strengths of *Growing Up in Ireland* for Policy & Practice

- Longitudinal
 - Change over time – dynamics. Rapid changes in Ireland’s society and economy in recent decades. ***Growing Up in Ireland*** allows us to assess these changes and policy response to them
 - Chart developmental trajectories
 - Individual-level change
 - Gross (longitudinal studies) vs net (repeated cross-sections)
- Policy impacts
 - Monitoring an evaluation
 - Benchmarking

What is the Prevention & Early Intervention Initiative (PEII)?

- For more than a decade, The Atlantic Philanthropies, sometimes in conjunction with Government and other organisations, has invested over €100m in agencies and community groups running 52 prevention and early intervention programmes throughout the island of Ireland.
- The initiative works across areas such as early childhood, youth mentoring, parenting, literacy and learning, and child health and behaviour.
- A condition of funding was that organisations rigorously evaluated their work.



Breadth of the PEII

- A complex initiative consisting of 52 programmes in 18 agencies.
- 26 evaluations conducted so far....
- In which over 10,000 children participated
- Over 4,000 parents, teachers, day care professionals, youth workers and volunteers received direct services and/or training.
- 15 randomised control trials conducted so far, in addition to quasi-experimental studies, process evaluations and action research studies.
- Mixed methods approach adopted in numerous evaluations which paints a holistic picture of programme implementation and impact at local level.

Remainder of presentation

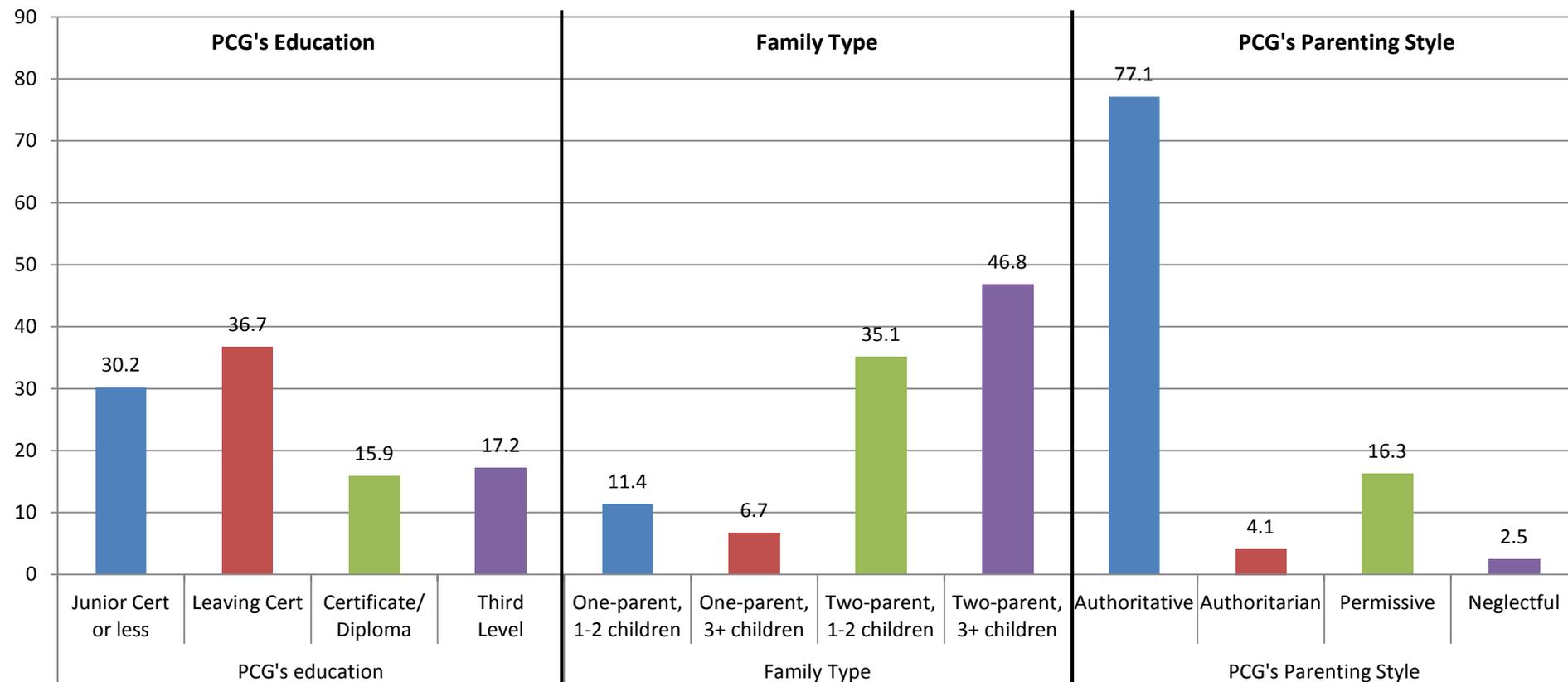
- First, consider briefly example of data from 9-year cohort in ***Growing Up in Ireland*** to examine aspects of parents and families and how these are related to child outcomes
- Secondly, consider:
 - Findings from the Prevention and Early Intervention Initiative in these areas
 - Key messages emerging
- Show how ***Growing Up*** and PEII can work together to inform policy and practise



Growing Up in Ireland – Characteristics of 9-year-olds and their families

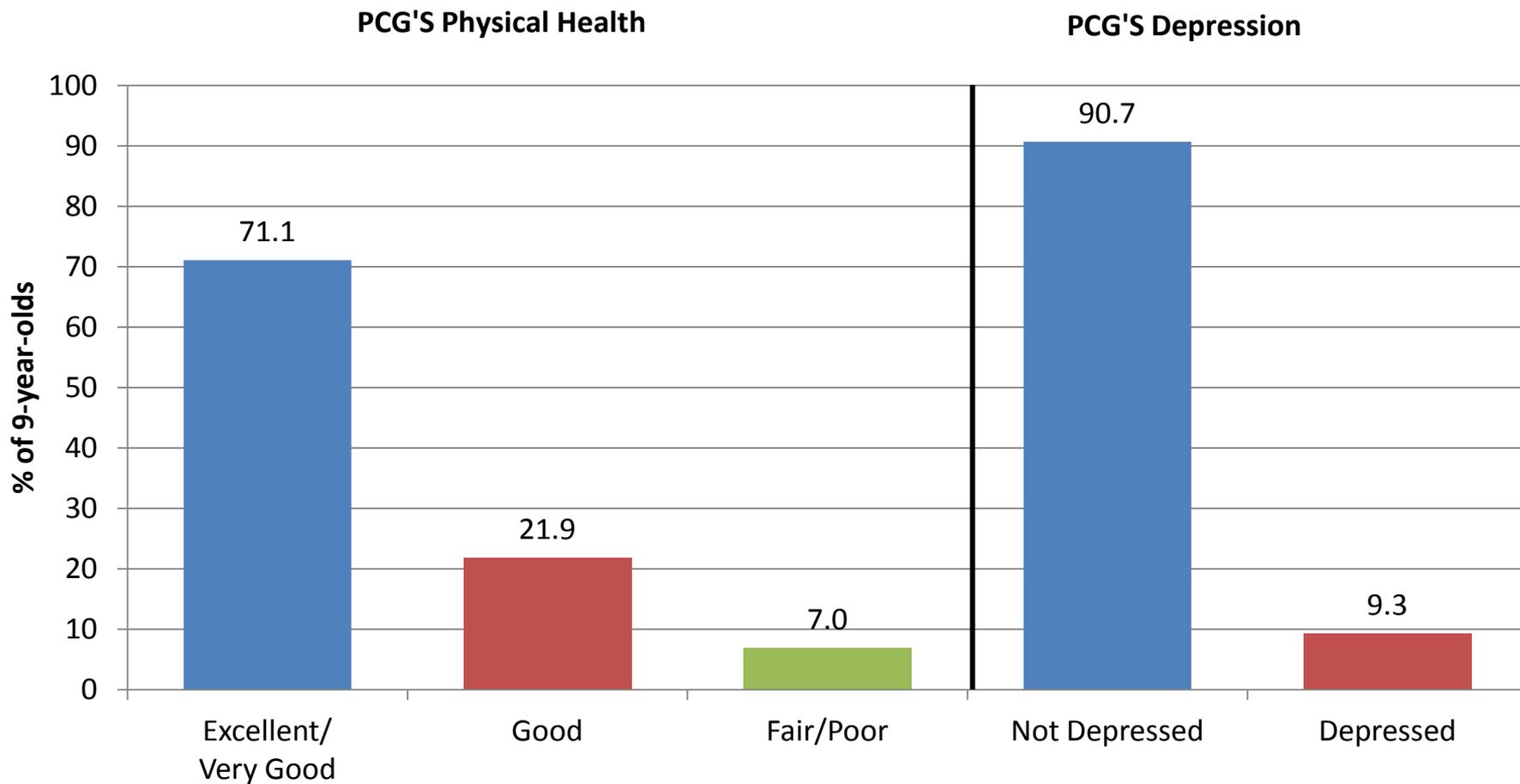


- 56,500 9-year-olds in the country
- Primary Caregiver (PCG) of 95.5% is their mother; 2.2% their father.





Characteristics of 9-year-olds and their families



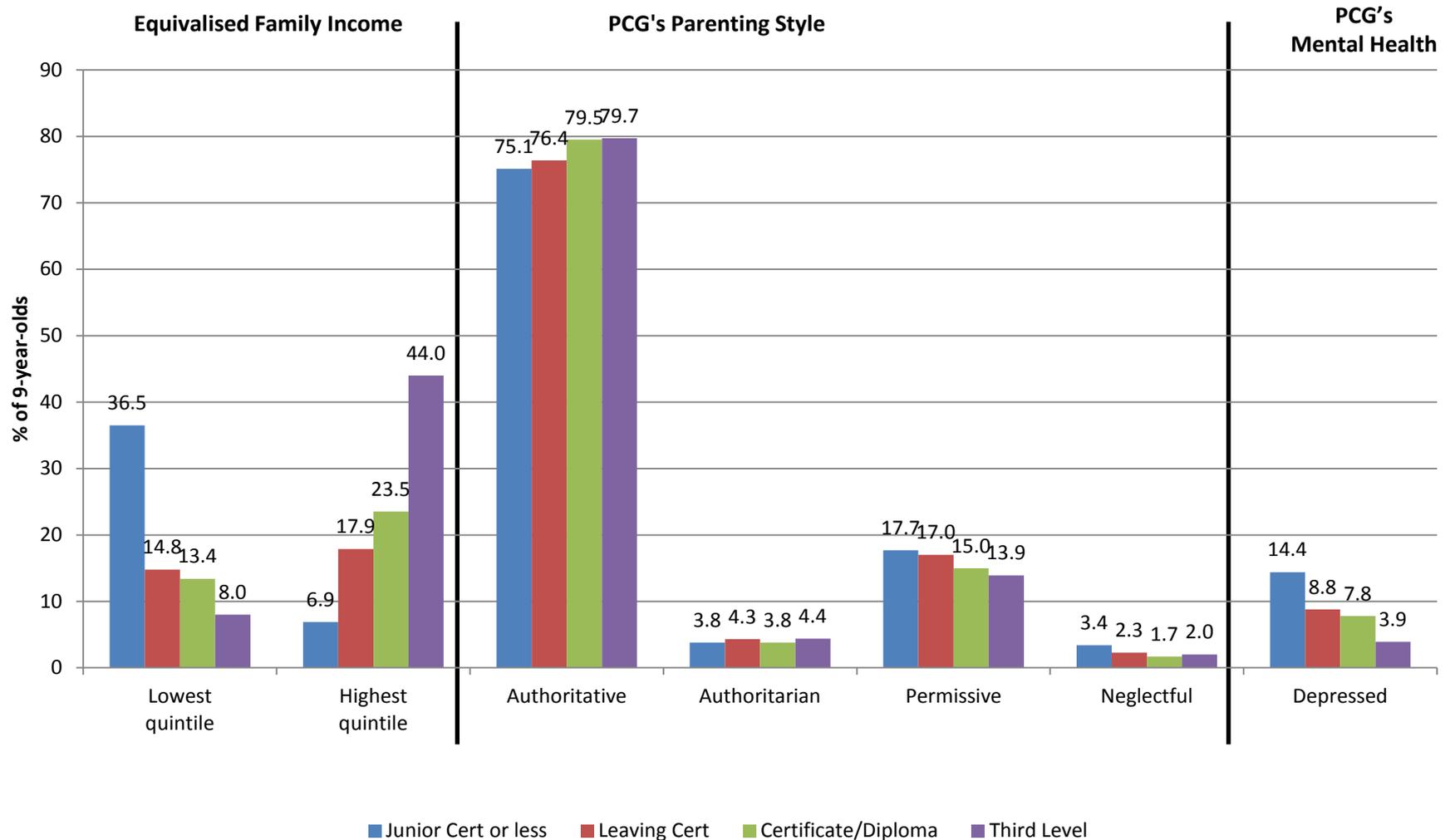


Characteristics of 9-year-olds and their families



- How are some of these characteristics inter-related?

Mother's Education:

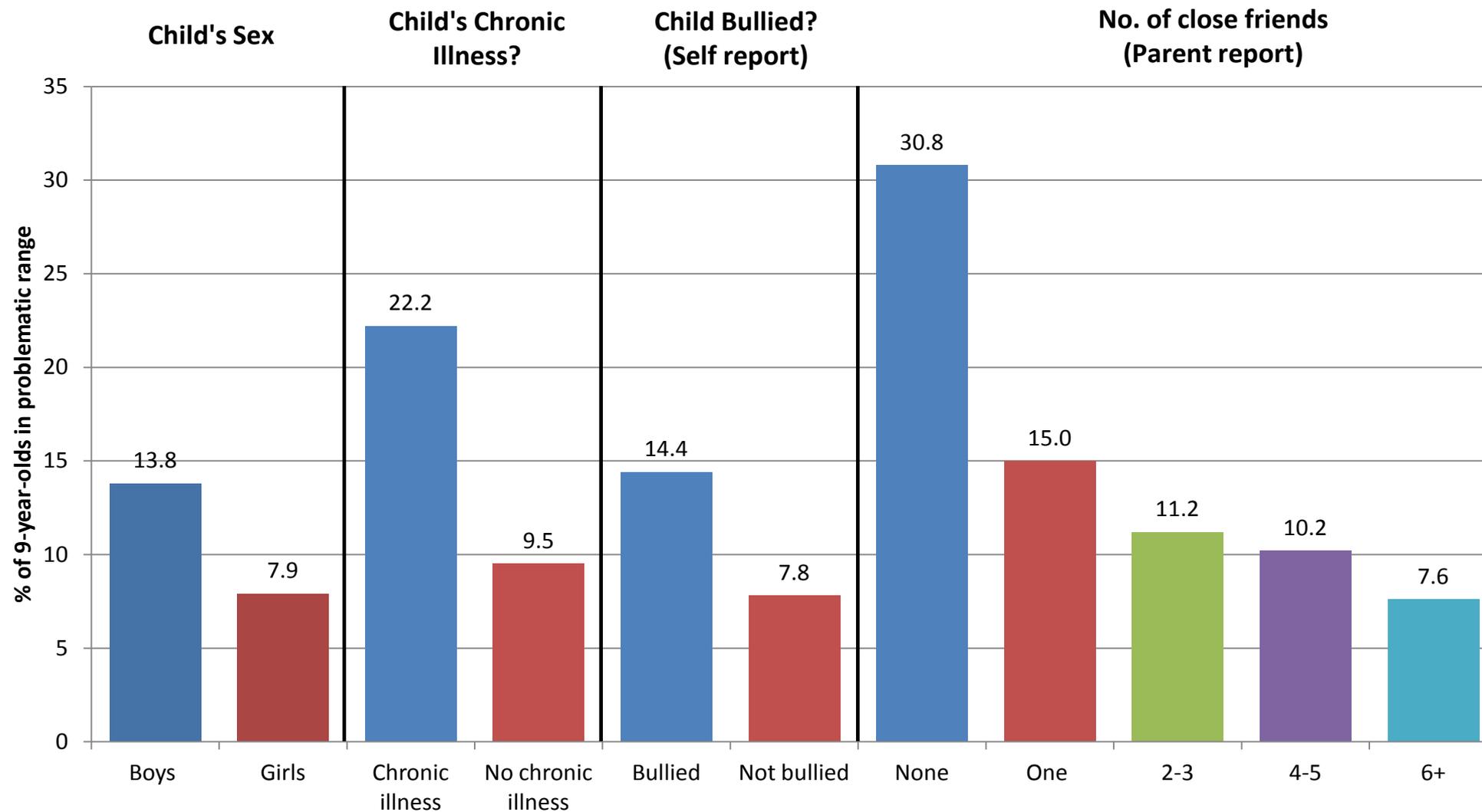


Parenting and Socio-emotional Outcomes

- Are family and parenting characteristics related to child outcomes? Which characteristics does *Growing Up in Ireland* identify as a potential input to policy and practice
- Consider socio-emotional/behavioural outcomes
- Socio-emotional/behavioural outcomes - Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (**SDQ**)
 - Four deficit focused subscales (each running from 0-10):
 - emotional problems; conduct problems; hyper activity/inattention; peer relationship problems
 - Higher the score the greater the child’s socio-emotional and behavioural problems
 - Teacher and parent report recorded in respect of 9-year-olds. Teacher report used here
 - Top 10% of children in potentially “problematic” range – referred to in literature as “abnormal”



Socio-emotional/behavioural difficulties (SDQ) Problematic Range – PCG's characteristics



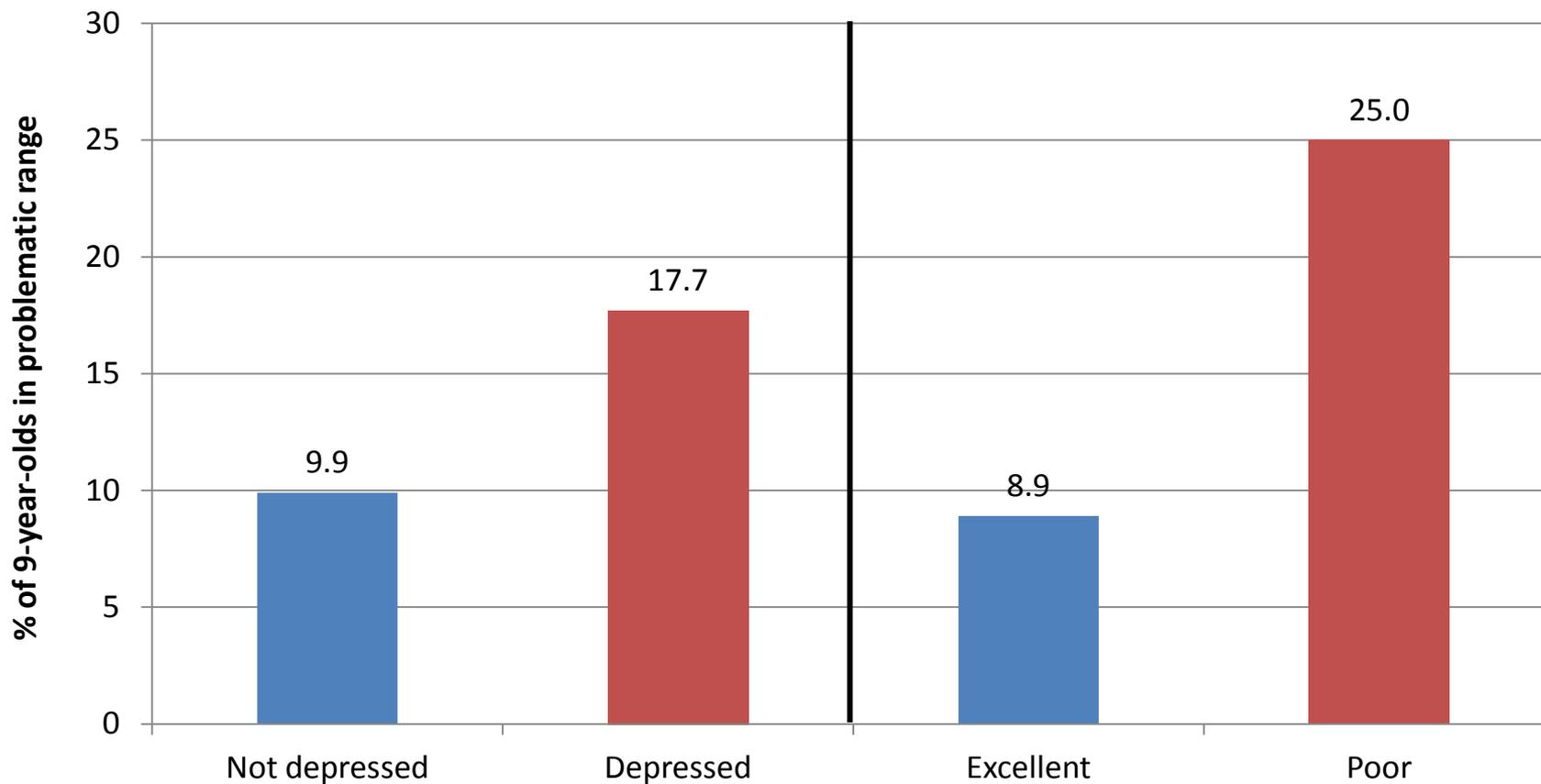


Socio-emotional/behavioural difficulties (SDQ) Problematic Range – PCG's characteristics



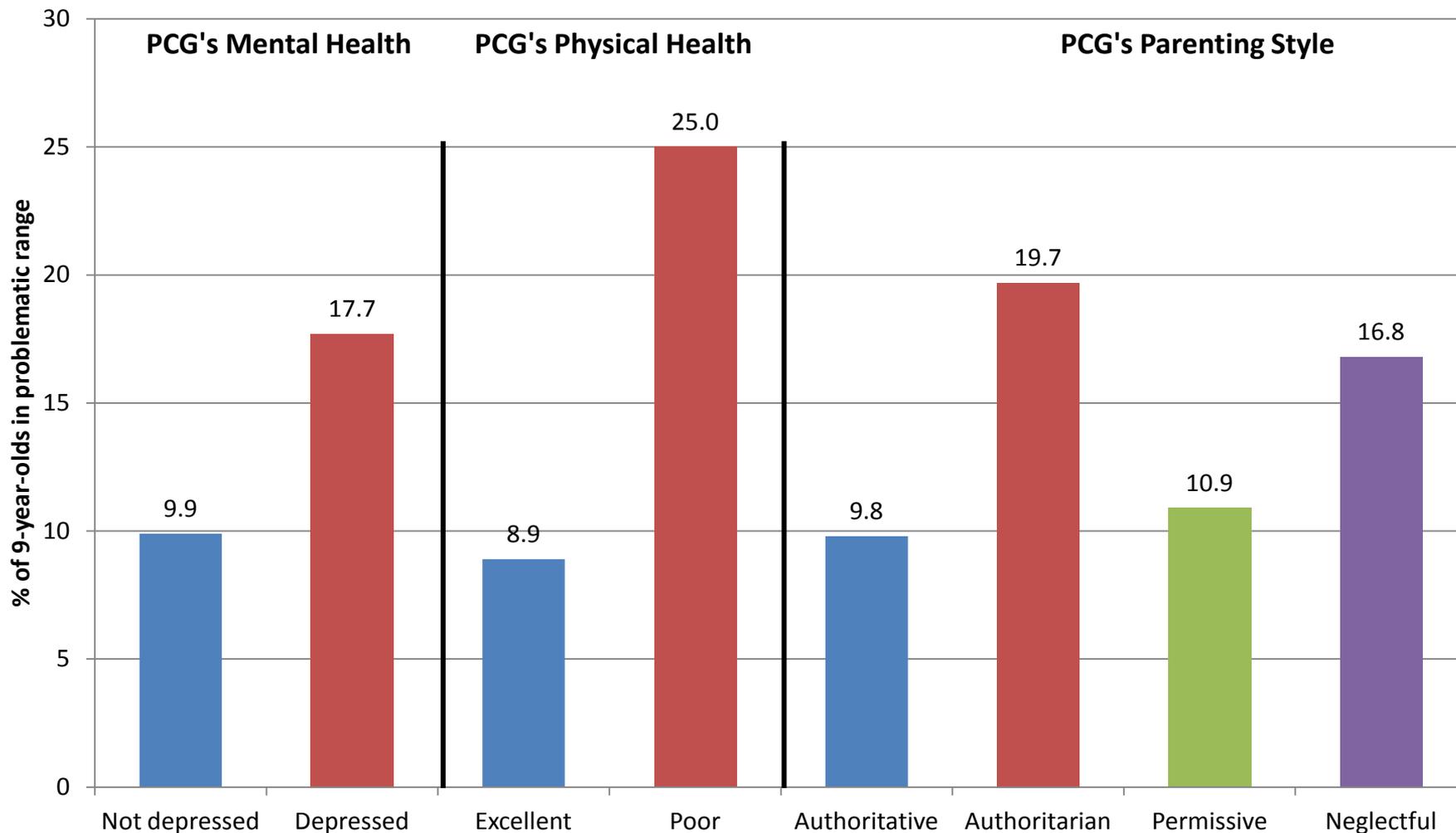
PCG's Mental Health

PCG's Physical Health





Socio-emotional/behavioural difficulties (SDQ) Problematic Range – child's characteristics

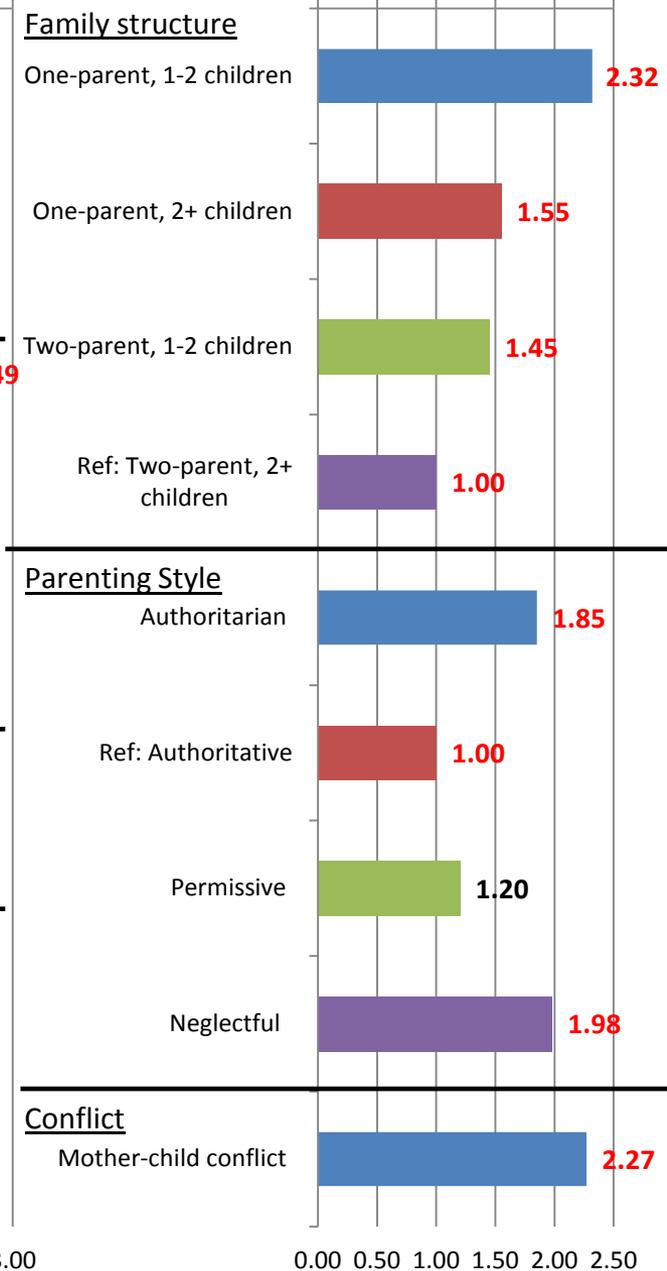
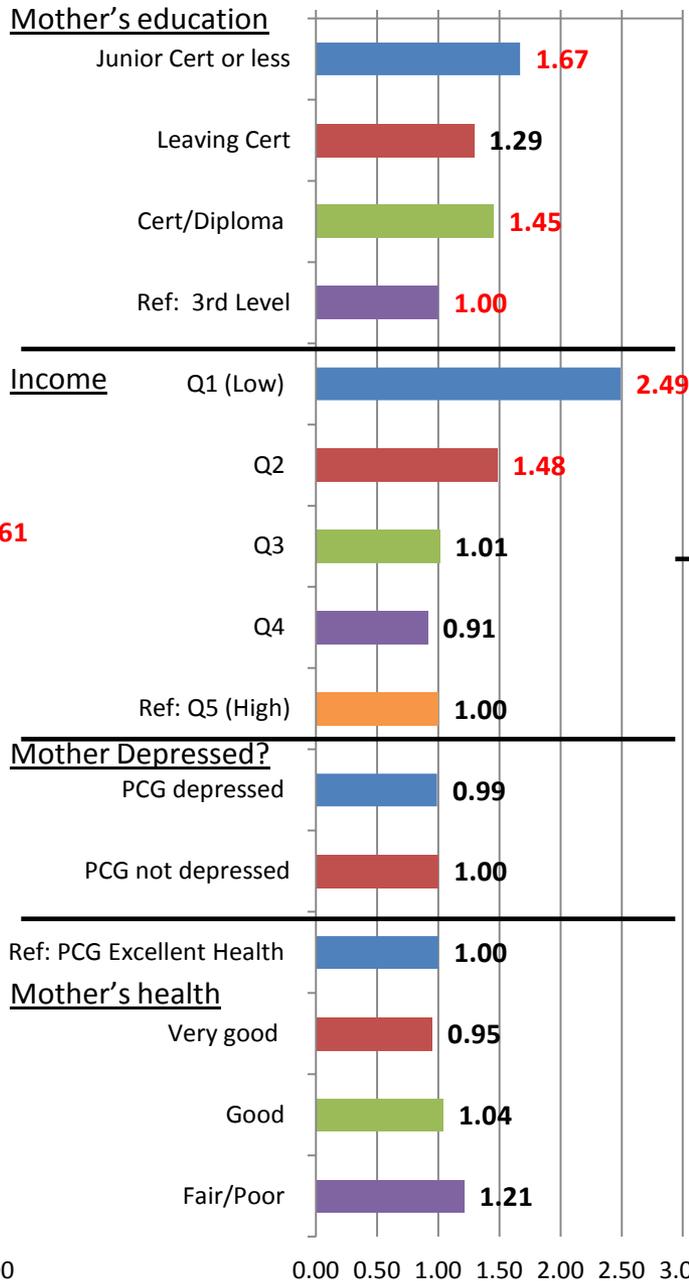
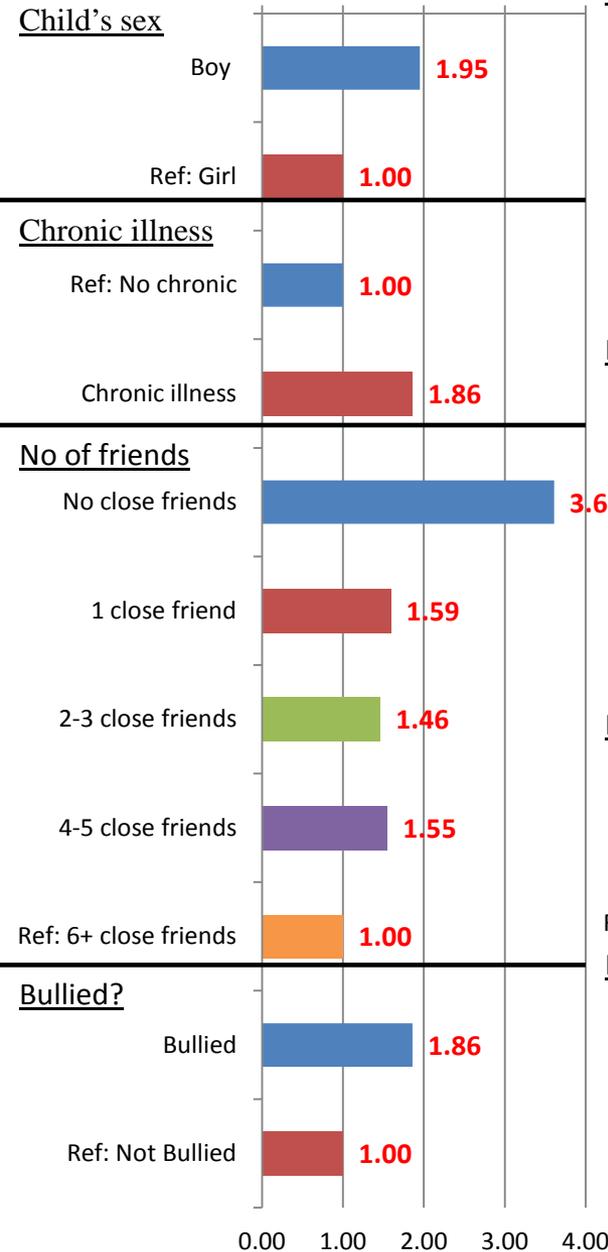


Odds ratios of 9-year-old being in problematic range

Child's Characteristics

Family Characteristics

Parenting



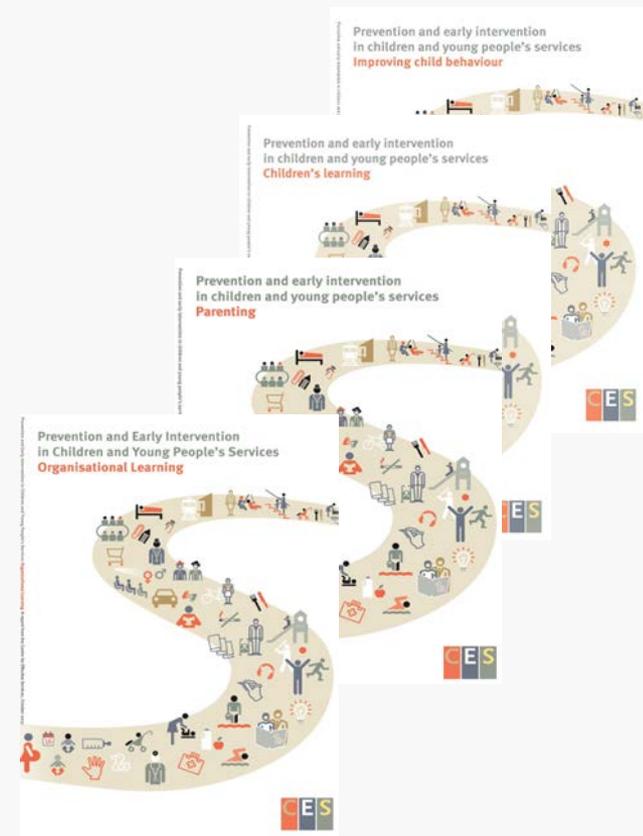
What does this show?

- In terms of socio-emotional development we have seen:
 - importance of child's gender (boys more likely than girls)
 - child's chronic illness
 - child's network of friends and peer relationships
 - parenting styles
 - mother-child conflict
 - over-riding importance of mother's education
 - family income - for some low-income groups
 - when accounting for other characteristics, PCG's mental and physical health not statistically significant in own right. Bivariate basis it was related.

Capturing the Learning from the PEII

- CES is synthesising the overarching, collective learning from evaluations conducted as part of the Prevention & Early Intervention Initiative:
- Six outcome reports & briefing papers
- Organisational Learning report
- Parenting
- Children's Learning
- Improving Child Behaviour
- Promoting Inclusion
- Child Health & Development

Synthesis does not endorse any particular programme or make comparisons between one programme or another. Extracts findings from the programme, interventions or service as a whole



Organisational Learning – Key Learning

- *There is no one magic bullet to improving outcomes for all children.*
- *Development & Implementation of a new approach takes time.*

Organisation	Service/ Programme	Target group(s)	Duration/ intensity	Description
Longford Westmeath Parenting Partnership	Triple P Parenting Programme (Levels 1 – 5)	All parents in Longford and Westmeath of children aged 0-7	2 hour stand alone session (Level 3) or 8 weeks (Level 4)	A multi-level parenting programme focused on reducing childhood emotional and behavioural problems. Includes support for parenting in the general population but the focus here is on Levels 3 and 4 aimed at parents who are experiencing problems with their children.
Archways	Incredible Years Parent	Parents of children Aged 3-7	2-2.5 hours per week for 12-14 weeks	Trains parents to support their children's social and emotional development.
	Incredible Years Teacher	Teachers of children aged 4-7	1 day per month for 5 months	Trains and supports teachers in classroom management techniques.
Northside Partnership	Preparing For Life	Families of children aged 0-5	Fortnightly home visits and a range of other support for 5 years	An intensive home-based early intervention/prevention programme designed to support families from pregnancy until their child starts school.
Lifestart	Growing Child Parenting Prog.	Parents of children aged 0-5	Monthly home visits of between 30-60 minutes for 5 years	To help parents to support their child's physical, intellectual, emotional and social development and to promote school readiness.
Parenting NI	Parenting UR Teen	Parents of young people aged 11-18	2 hrs per week for 8 weeks	A group training programme for parents of teenagers developed by Parenting NI. overall aim is to improve family functioning. Parents refer themselves.
Childhood Development Initiative (CDI)	Doodle Den	Children aged 5-6	1.5 hours per week for 36 weeks and 3 family & 6 parent sessions.	Doodle Den is an in-school and after school literacy programme including child, parent and family components. It aims to improve literacy, school attendance, parent involvement in and out of school time, and improve child relationships with their parents and peers.
	CDI Early Years	Children Aged 2½-3	Preschool and other types of support for 2 years	An early care and education programme designed to support all aspects of children's development including their social and emotional learning.
	Mate-Tricks	Children aged 9-10	1.5 hours twice a week for 1 year and 6 parent and 3 family sessions	An after-school mentoring programme focused on supporting pro-social behaviour, reducing anti-social behaviour and developing confidence. Delivered in youth settings or school.
Early Years	Eager and Able to Learn	Children aged 2-3	Delivered over 8-9 months to children and 3 home visits to parents	A comprehensive centre-based and home-based early care and education programme. It aims to motivate children to learn; to socially and emotionally be able to enter relationships with adults and other children so learning can be promoted; and cognitively to ensure children are able to take advantage of learning opportunities.
	Media Initiative for Children: Respecting Difference	Children aged 3-5, their parents and teachers	1 academic year and 5 one minute media messages for 3 weeks, 3 times per year	This programmes uses a combination of cartoon media messages around diversity with an Early Years programme. It aims to promote positive attitudes to physical, social and cultural differences among young children, practitioners and parents. The messages also address bullying behaviours.

Approaches to Supporting Parents

Population approaches

- Legislative changes e.g. physical chastisement ban.
- Universally accessible parenting programmes (Triple P)

Home Visiting Programmes

- Nurse Family Partnership
- Preparing for Life

Group Based Parenting Programmes

- Incredible Years
- Triple P

One-to-One Individual Parenting Programmes

- Marte Meo

Family Based interventions

- Strengthening Families Program

Parenting – Key Learning

Programmes that worked directly with parents as their main focus **successfully reduced levels of parenting stress and improved child behaviour.**

To increase parental engagement, programmes needed to be **accessible** to parents, **convenient** & a **legitimate** setting for the work being done, or delivered at home.

The quality of the relationship between the **parent & practitioner** contributes to the success of the programme.

Targeted vs Universal

Both targeted and universal programmes were able to achieve positive changes, but targeted programmes had a tendency to produce a bigger effect

- When children are already displaying problems, there is more scope for improvement
- Achieving smaller changes for larger groups of children is also worthwhile
- Universal services may help to avoid the stigma associated with being singled out for targeted services
- Universal programmes are usually less intensive and cost less per child BUT the greater costs of targeted interventions is focused on those who would likely incur greater future service costs
- It is not a case of either/or: both are needed

Interagency Working

Costs of prevention and early Interventions programmes are borne by a variety of agencies, highlighting the need for a partnership approach

The PEII has increased collaboration between children's services & helped improve planning at local level

Collaboration in service delivery means practitioners can share good practice across interventions

Interagency working can increase engagement & buy-in from key stakeholders, avoid duplication of services & make successful implementation more likely

Collecting cost-benefit information over time can encourage interagency working and investment.

Recommendations for consideration

- Develop a focused parenting framework/action plan within the wider National Children and Young People's Policy Framework being developed by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs
- Intervene early (ante natally – post natally) – ***Growing Up in Ireland*** data from 9 mths and 3 years illustrate social gradients from earliest age
- Easily accessible community-based integrated early intervention wrap around services or programmes through, for example, primary care teams
- Consider population approaches to supporting parents, by providing information to prospective parents through public information and media campaigns or the provision of universal parenting programmes, e.g. Triple P Parenting programme

Recommendations for consideration

- Parent focused programme/interventions – increasing parenting skills/capacity, reducing stress and improving child behaviour – all shown in ***Growing Up in Ireland*** to be associated with child’s socio-emotional development
- Address wider parental and familial factors impacting on parenting capacity and family functioning e.g. mental health, substance abuse, through the provision of intensive home visiting, individual one-to-one or family based interventions for high risk families and those living in disadvantaged areas – characteristics identified in ***Growing Up in Ireland***
- Longer term programmes – parental education (especially mothers) in parallel to children’s learning – importance of maternal education identified in ***Growing Up in Ireland***

Recommendations for consideration

- Include parental well-being indicators, as well as the existing child well-being indicator sets, in *Growing up in Ireland* and the bi-annual *State of the Nation's Children's Reports*
- The integration of this data with information from the Central Statistics Office will inform future planning and service development, and enable cross comparison of progress in improving outcomes for children at national and local level.
- Interagency and cross government structures to supporting parents can be implemented under national interagency collaborative structures, such as Children's Services Committees.