INCREDIBLE YEARS LIMERICK
Final Evaluation Report

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with

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CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT UNIT
AONAD FORBARTHA CURACLAIM

Mary Immaculate College
~University of Limerick~

"We're hoping all the teachers and all the staff would be trained and it would become an integral part of our work"[1].

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1 Incredible Years Limerick Group Leader Perspective.

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Acronyms

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
APA	American Psychiatric Association
CAMHS	Child and Mental Health Service
CDC	Child Development Centre
CDU	Curriculum Development Unit
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
DES	Department of Education and Science (pre-2010)
DES	Department of Education and Skills (post-2010)
ED	Electoral Division
HSCL	Home School Community Liaison
HSE	Health Service Executive
LIT	Limerick Institute of Technology
LSSC	Limerick Social Services Centre
MIC	Mary Immaculate College
MIREC	Mary Immaculate Research Ethics Committee
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
PAUL	People Against Unemployment Limerick
SDQ	Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
SPHE	Social and Personal Health Education
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SVP	St. Vincent de Paul
TED	Targeting Educational Disadvantage
TCM	Teacher Classroom Management

Glossary of Terms

Delivery Setting A location and environment where delivery of an *Incredible Years* programme under *Incredible Years Limerick* takes place. Examples are: schools, family resource centres and local health centres, etc.

Early Years Early childhood from birth to 6 years.

Educational Disadvantage A situation where individuals derive less benefit from the education system than their peers, due to social or economic deprivation.

Electoral Division (ED) The smallest geographic area for which Census 2006 data is publicly available in Ireland.

Group Leaders Teachers, childcare workers, Special Needs Assistants, Home School Community Liaison Co-ordinators, project workers and agency managers who deliver *Incredible Years* programmes under *Incredible Years Limerick.*

Incredible Years An international, early intervention programme targeting children, ranging from early infants to ten year olds, who are exhibiting social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Incredible Years Limerick The overall term given to the funded and co-ordinated delivery of *Incredible Years* programmes in seven locations in Limerick city.

Limerick Regeneration Programme 2009-2018 The plan for the regeneration of deprived areas of Limerick City addressing issues of criminality, economic and infrastructural regeneration, and social and educational development.

Programme Staff Includes staff working within PAUL Partnership with responsibilities relating to *Incredible Years Limerick* (Programme Manager, Training & Development Co-ordinator, Project Support Staff and Performance Monitoring Officer).

Programme Operational Group Includes all the Group Leaders delivering *Incredible Years* programmes under *Incredible Years Limerick.*

Relative Index Score The levels of deprivation/affluence of any one area relative to all other areas at that point in time.

Strategic Steering Group Representatives from agencies, third-level institutions, local community groups and schools responsible for the strategic implementation of *Incredible Years Limerick.*

Chapter 1: An Introduction to *Incredible Years Limerick*

1.1 Introduction

The *Incredible Years* programme is an international, early intervention programme targeting children, ranging in age from young infants to ten year olds, who are exhibiting social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. *Incredible Years* consists of three types of programmes, aimed at parents/guardians[2], children and teachers[3]. Each of the programmes aims to achieve long-term positive impacts on children's behaviour. This report is an evaluation of the *Incredible Years Limerick* programme (2010). The evaluation began in March 2010 and was completed in September 2010.

1.2 Profile – *Incredible Years Limerick*

Incredible Years Limerick was established in 2007 and was initially implemented in three locations in Limerick City. The overarching objective of *Incredible Years* is:

> "…*preventing and treating behavioural problems in 2-10 year old children*" (Archways, 2007a: 23).

There are three types of *Incredible Years* programmes targeting parents, children and teachers. Table 1 below outlines the individual *Incredible Years* programmes under each target group.

Table 1: *Incredible Years* Programmes		
Parent Programmes	**Child Programmes**	**Teacher Programmes**
➢ Basic Parent Programme ➢ Advanced Parent Programme ➢ School Readiness Programme ➢ Infant and Parent Programme ➢ Toddler and Parent Programme	➢ Small Group Dina Programme ➢ Dina in the Classroom Programme	➢ Teacher Classroom Management Programme

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2 The term 'parent' will be used in the remainder of the document to denote parent/guardian.

3 The term 'teacher' will be used in the remainder of the document to denote all staff delivering the *Incredible Years Limerick* programme in the schools and settings. This includes teachers, family resource centre staff, social services centre staff, family agency and setting staff and the Group Leaders.

The delivery of *Incredible Years Limerick* is co-ordinated by PAUL Partnership[4] on behalf of a multi-agency Strategic Steering Group, comprising representatives of:

- Health Service Executive (HSE)
- Department of Education and Skills (DES)
- Mary Immaculate College (MIC)
- Limerick Regeneration Agencies
- National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)
- Barnardos
- St. Vincent de Paul (SVP)
- Limerick Social Services Centre (LSSC)
- Local community groups and schools
- Family Resource Centres
- Archways (the national organisation overseeing the implementation of the *Incredible Years* Programme in Ireland).

The objectives of the *Incredible Years* Strategic Steering Group are to:

1. Give strategic direction on the *Incredible Years* project development and implementation in Limerick.
2. Make collective decisions on project targets, outcomes and funding.
3. Agree the Action Plan and monitor its progress on an annual basis and to agree major changes to the Action Plan as and when required.
4. Support the project to demonstrate fidelity to the *Incredible Years* evidence based model.
5. Share and evaluate learning from the *Incredible Years* project.
6. Facilitate collaborative programme evaluation and research.
7. Evaluate shared learning and identify opportunities to implement evaluation findings.

1.2.1 Programme Objectives

The three types of programmes i.e., for parents, children and teachers, are designed to:

- Support and reinforce a child's pro-social and co-operative behaviours;
- Discourage disruptive and confrontational behaviours in children;
- Develop a child's social competence;

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4 PAUL Partnership is an organisation made up of communities, state agencies, social partners, voluntary groups and elected representatives. It works with local communities that have benefited least from economic and social development and aims to promote social inclusion and improve the quality of life for people living in the local Limerick communities (PAUL Partnership, n.d.).

- Reduce a child's aggressive behaviours;
- When children misbehave - help parents' interactions with their children to become more positive;
- Support parents to develop effective responses to specific child behaviours;
- When children misbehave – support teachers to develop effective interactions with their students to become more positive;
- Change teachers' responses to specific child behaviours; and
- Assist children with behavioural problems to experience improved outcomes through the skills and strategies introduced by each programme.

The *Incredible Years* programme is based on the psychological principle that behaviour is learned through social interaction (Archways, 2007a). This in turn suggests that social interaction is the solution to changing adult and child behaviours (Archways, 2007a). The *Incredible Years* programmes are therefore founded on a 'logic model' which demonstrates that "…*if the Incredible Years programme is delivered as intended then it will, depending on the particular programme option, produce improvements in the competencies of parents, teachers and children*" (Archways, 2007a: 23). For example, positive social interactions with adults and peers are intended to encourage children's pro-social behaviours, while also discouraging disruptive behaviours (a comprehensive summary of the outputs and outcomes associated with each programme (parent, teacher and child) is contained in Appendix A).

1.2.2 Programme Locations
The *Incredible Years Limerick* programmes are located across seven parishes/communities within Limerick City and are delivered in ten settings. Table 2, below, details the parishes/communities, settings and type of programmes being delivered within each setting.

Table 2: Parish/Community, Setting and *Incredible Years* Programme-Type		
Parish / Community	**Setting**	***Incredible Years* Programme**
St. Munchin's	St. Munchin's Family Resource Centre	Basic Parent Programme
		Child Small Group Dina Programme
		Infant & Parent Programme
		School Readiness Programme
	St. Munchin's Girls' National School	Dina in the Classroom Programme
		School Readiness Programme
Southill	Southill Junior School	Basic Parent Programme
		Child Small Group Dina Programme
		Dina in the Classroom Programme
		Teacher Classroom Management
	Gaelscoil Sheoirse Clancy	Dina in the Classroom Programme
St. Mary's	St. Mary's Boys' National School	Child Small Group Dina Programme
		Dina in the Classroom Programme
	Barnardos, Islandgate	Basic Parent Programme
Moyross	Corpus Christi National School	Basic Parent Programme
		Child Small Group Dina Programme
		Dina in the Classroom Programme
Our Lady of Lourdes	Our Lady of Lourdes National School	Basic Parent Programme
		Dina in the Classroom Programme
Our Lady Queen of Peace	Our Lady Queen of Peace National School	Basic Parent Programme
		Dina in the Classroom Programme
Limerick City Centre	Limerick Social Services Centre Crèche	Infant & Parent Programme
		Toddler & Parent Programme

Not all seven programmes detailed above were being administered at the time of the evaluation. The programmes that were being delivered, and were therefore included in the evaluation, were the:

  i. Basic Parent Programme,
 ii. Small Group Dina Programme,
iii. Dina in the Classroom Programme, and
iv. Teacher Classroom Management Programme.

1.3   *Incredible Years Limerick* Evaluation

In December 2009, the *Incredible Years Limerick* Strategic Steering Group publicly invited tenders from suitably qualified researchers to undertake the evaluation in respect of the:

  i.   *Incredible Years Limerick* - Programme Management, Implementation and Delivery, and
 ii.   *Incredible Years Limerick* - Programme Impact.

The Targeting Educational Disadvantage (TED) project was successful in securing the bid to conduct the evaluation, which commenced in March 2010. The TED evaluation team was contracted to provide research and evaluation services in respect of the *Incredible Years* programmes that were running in Limerick City during the academic year 2009/2010. An Evaluation Sub-Group, comprising representatives of the *Incredible Years* Strategic Steering Group i.e., agencies[5] involved in the management and delivery of *Incredible Years* in Limerick City, was established to oversee the evaluation process and to liaise with the evaluation team.

1.3.1   Profile – TED Project

The TED project is located within the Curriculum Development Unit (CDU) in Mary Immaculate College (MIC), Limerick. The core aim of TED is "…*to harness and develop the strengths and resources of Mary Immaculate College to enable those experiencing educational disadvantage to reach their full potential*" (Mary Immaculate College, 2009).

The specific objectives of TED are to:
- Work within Mary Immaculate College to support students' understanding of educational disadvantage in a manner which contributes to their professional practice,
- Increase social inclusion within the College,
- Influence and contribute to the development of educational policy vis-à-vis addressing educational disadvantage,
- Work in partnership with other educational stakeholders in identifying needs and designing, conducting, monitoring and evaluating interventions which address educational disadvantage, and
- Develop an understanding of educational disadvantage in order to stimulate educational innovation and policy and to promote good practice through research.

The TED team works closely with DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) (DES, 2005) Urban Band 1 primary and post-primary schools in Limerick City and County, and also with communities in Limerick City, Limerick County and a network of primary schools in Clare, Galway, Mayo, Sligo, Westmeath and Longford.

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5 See Section 1.2 for a list of the relevant agencies.

1.3.2 Evaluation Approach

The evaluation aimed to assess:

(i) The management, implementation and delivery of *Incredible Years Limerick* (this element of the evaluation will be referred to as **'programme management'** for the purposes of this report), and

(ii) The impact of the programme, incorporating pre-programme delivery and post-programme delivery measures to assess change over time (this element will be referred to as **'programme impact'** for the purposes of this report).

This study evaluated programmes (not including the infant and parent programme, toddler and parent programme or school readiness programme) being delivered in Limerick City between March and June 2010. The next section details the evaluation objectives of both strands of the evaluation, as well as profiling the participants and detailing the research approach adopted for the evaluation.

1.3.2.1 Programme Management

The specific objectives of the 'programme management' element of the evaluation were to:

1. Document the development, management, and implementation of *Incredible Years Limerick* since the establishment of the *Incredible Years* Strategic Steering Group in October 2008.

2. Illustrate and analyse the strengths of the programme management and implementation.

3. Highlight and analyse the challenges in relation to programme management and implementation.

4. Document and review the lessons learned from programme management and implementation to date.

5. Make recommendations for the future management and implementation of the programme.

The stakeholders consulted through the 'programme management' element of the evaluation included:

- *Incredible Years* Programme Staff - Programme Manager, Training & Development Co-ordinator, Project Support Staff and Performance Monitoring Officer (with responsibility for *Incredible Years* research and evaluation),
- Members of the Strategic Steering Group, and

- ▪ Members of the Programme Operational Group[6].

The consultation process at this level was largely qualitative in nature i.e., semi-structured interviews, focus groups and an open-ended survey. The data collection instruments designed in support of this strand of the evaluation explored the strengths and challenges relative to the development, management and implementation of the *Incredible Years* programmes. The data collection instruments (which are contained in Appendices C, D, E and F) explored the following items in greater detail:

- ▪ Overall aims and objectives of the intervention and their relevance to the target population,
- ▪ Quality and extent of partnership and communication between the relevant stakeholders,
- ▪ Appropriateness of the resources provided,
- ▪ Quality and effectiveness of the policies and procedures,
- ▪ Level and effectiveness of support to project partners and stakeholders to engage in the *Incredible Years* programmes,
- ▪ Sustainability of the programme, and
- ▪ Ability of the project to adapt to temporal and spatial circumstances.

1.3.2.2 Programme Impact

The primary objective of the 'programme impact' element of the evaluation was to assess the impact of *Incredible Years Limerick* on its programme users, by gathering and analysing pre-delivery and post-delivery quantitative data. A positive change in programme participants' behaviour and relationships (measured using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire ratings) is considered a positive impact[7]. PAUL Partnership held overall responsibility for administering and gathering the 'programme impact' instruments and data. Group Leaders administered the instruments with individual participants. The TED evaluation team held responsibility for data entry and analysis of the data gathered using those instruments.

The stakeholders consulted through the 'programme impact' element of the evaluation were:
- ▪ Parents,
- ▪ Members of the Programme Operational Group, and

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6 The members of the Programme Operational Group will be referred to as 'Group Leaders' for the duration of this report. The term covers all those people who facilitated Incredible Years Limerick programmes. There were forty-six Group Leaders in total who were responsible for the delivery of Incredible Years programmes in the seven areas identified in Table 2 (Section 1.2.2).

7 See Section 1.3.4 for a note on the limitations associated with the 'programme impact' element of the evaluation.

- Teachers who participated in the Teacher Classroom Management (TCM) Programme.

The instruments detailed below were administered pre- and post-delivery of the *Incredible Years* programmes. Table 3 below illustrates the response rates for each individual instrument. The findings relative to the pre-programme delivery and post-programme delivery data are contained in Chapter 6 of this report and copies of the instruments are contained in Appendices G, H, I, and J.

a. ***Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)***

The SDQ is a two-page questionnaire which was designed by Goodman (1997 and 1999). The instrument asks the respondent (parent or teacher) a series of 25 questions in respect of the child in question. This instrument was administered by *Incredible Years* Group Leaders on two occasions – pre-programme delivery and post-programme delivery. A total of 61 pre-programme parent SDQs were returned and 48 post-programme parent questionnaires were returned. 230 pre-programme teacher SDQs were returned and 213 post-programme teacher SDQs were returned (see Appendices H and I for copies of the instruments).

b. ***Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Questionnaire***

Teachers participating in the Teacher Classroom Management Programme completed a *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Questionnaire* on two occasions – pre- and post-programme delivery. 11 questionnaires were completed on both occasions (see Appendix J for a copy of the instrument).

c. ***Participant Demographic Form***

Each parent participating in an *Incredible Years* Programme (or who had a child participating in the Small Group Dina Programme) was invited to complete a brief *Participant Demographic Form*. A total of 48 Participant Demographic Forms were returned (see Appendix G for a copy of the Participant Demographic Form).

d. ***Teacher Classroom Management End of Programme Questionnaire***

Teachers who participated in the Teacher Classroom Management (TCM) Programme were invited to complete an *Incredible Years End of Programme Questionnaire* at the end of the intervention. A total of 11 End of Programme Questionnaires were returned. The findings of the TCM *End of Programme Questionnaire* are presented in Chapter 6 of this report.

Table 3: Programme Impact: Instrument Response Rate		
Instrument	**Participant & Phase of Delivery**	**Response Rate**
Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaire	Parent - Pre-Programme Delivery	61
	Parent - Post-Programme Delivery	48
	Teacher - Pre-Programme Delivery	230
	Teacher - Post-Programme Delivery	213
Teacher Sense of Efficacy Questionnaire	Teacher - Pre-Programme Delivery	11
	Teacher - Post-Programme Delivery	11
Participant Demographic Form	Parent - Post programme Delivery	48
End of Programme Questionnaire	Teacher - Post Programme Delivery	11

The evaluation team began their process of consultation mid-way through the delivery of the *Incredible Years* programmes (April – May 2010), using:

(a) focus groups with members of the Strategic Steering Group and the Programme Operational Group, and

(b) Semi-structured interviews with *Incredible Years* Programme Staff and individual members of the Strategic Steering Group.

Members of the Programme Operational Group were again consulted post-programme delivery (end of June 2010) using a largely open-ended survey.

1.3.3 Ethical Considerations

The evaluators complied with the code of ethics for social researchers as established by the Sociological Association of Ireland and the procedures for ethical clearance adopted by the Mary Immaculate Research Ethics Committee (MIREC). The following steps were taken to ensure that the evaluation was ethically appropriate:

i. **Ethical Clearance** - Prior to commencing the evaluation, the TED team applied for ethical clearance through MIREC, which oversees all research conducted with human participants, to ensure that it is conducted in an ethically appropriate manner. MIREC reviewed ethical procedures for all aspects of the evaluation before granting TED permission to proceed. For the 'programme management' element of the evaluation TED personnel were responsible for data collection, entry and analysis. MIREC also reviewed the ethical procedures adopted by the *Incredible Years* Evaluation Sub-Group in terms of the 'programme impact' element of the evaluation (for which the *Incredible Years* Group Leaders, supported by PAUL Partnership staff, conducted data

collection and TED personnel conducted data entry and analysis). Ethical clearance was granted to TED by MIREC to conduct the 'programme management' fieldwork and to accept and analyse the 'programme impact' data.

ii. **Information Leaflet** – Upon receipt of ethical clearance and prior to commencing the fieldwork, an information leaflet describing the 'programme management' element of the evaluation, as well as the main ethical considerations of that process, was disseminated to prospective participants (see Appendix B for a copy of the information leaflet). Details pertaining to the following ethical issues were contained within the leaflet:

    a. *Confidentiality* – All information shared by the evaluation participants with the evaluation team (including *Incredible Years Limerick* Evaluation Sub-Group and staff, and TED researchers) would be treated in the strictest confidence. Data would not be shared with anyone else, except in aggregate form as part of the report findings. The leaflet stressed that, while all reasonable efforts would be made, confidentiality could not be guaranteed for stakeholders holding unique positions within the *Incredible Years* programme since their positions, and therefore perspectives, would be more easily identifiable in the data/findings.

    b. *Anonymity* - Research conducted with teachers, parents and children would be undertaken on an anonymous basis and the individual perspectives of participants (other than those holding identifiable positions within the *Incredible Years* programme) would not be identifiable in any accompanying research report.

    c. *Doing No Harm* **-** The TED research team guaranteed that all efforts would be made to ensure that no harm would come to any of the evaluation participants through the evaluation process. In the event of child protection disclosures being made during the evaluation, the evaluators assured prospective participants that the Children First - National Child Protection Guidelines would be adhered to.

iii. **Consent** – A consent form was disseminated to the prospective 'programme management' evaluation participants with the information leaflet (outlined above) to allow them to make informed consent to participate in the 'programme management' element of the evaluation (a copy of the consent form is contained in Appendix B). Only the participants who returned a completed consent form were included in the 'programme management' element of the evaluation. The *Incredible Years* Evaluation

Sub-Group and staff retained responsibility for accessing participant consent to participate in the 'programme impact' element of the research.

iv. **Storing and Recording Data** – The following procedures were adhered to with regard to the storing and recording of primary data:

   a. The quantitative data relative to the 'programme impact' phase of the evaluation was gathered by the *Incredible Years* team. This raw data was passed, by a representative of PAUL Partnership, to the TED Co-ordinator on a regular basis. Procedures were established by TED to support PAUL Partnership to record each individual raw survey passed to TED, using a duplicate system. A duplicate of this record was passed, with the raw data, to the TED Co-ordinator, at which stage a representative of TED confirmed receipt of each individual raw survey received. A copy of all records and written confirmations between TED and PAUL Partnership were stored (by TED) in a locked cabinet along with the raw data.

   b. A reliable coding system was designed by PAUL Partnership to ensure that no raw data received by TED contained any identifiable information relating to the 'programme impact' participants.

   c. TED ensured that all data gathered with the evaluation participants at the 'programme management' level remained confidential and that, where possible, the anonymity of participants was guaranteed. While all efforts were made, confidentiality and anonymity could not be guaranteed for stakeholders holding a unique position within the *Incredible Years* programme or within their respective agency. All information shared by the evaluation participants at the 'programme management' level was treated in the strictest of confidence. Data was not shared with any third party, except in aggregate form as part of the report findings.

   d. All raw data (paper and audio) was stored in a locked cabinet in the TED office for the duration of the evaluation. All audio recordings were destroyed upon completion of the evaluation. All raw paper data was coded and stored anonymously for the period of the evaluation and an additional three years (in line with the Data Protection Acts, 1988 and 2003).

   e. All raw data gathered by PAUL Partnership and TED was coded in advance of data entry. The 'programme impact' data was coded and anonymised before being made available to TED and the 'programme management' data was coded and anonymised by TED prior to data entry. The identities of the 'programme impact' participants were not, therefore, identifiable to TED at the

data entry stage. Additionally, TED does not hold any identifiable electronic data. All anonymised electronic data and findings will be retained indefinitely.

1.3.4 Limitations of the Evaluation

An important element of any evaluation is the ability of the evaluators to reflect on the key limitations of the research methodology employed. This exercise not only contributes to learning, but also informs future evaluations that may be commissioned relative to an *Incredible Years* programme. A key limitation, as identified by the research team during the evaluation was the employment of a single measure of child behaviour under the 'programme impact' element of the evaluation. Although the SDQ instruments are widely used as screening tools of children's behaviour and have been validated in a number of international studies (Goodman et al., 2000; Mellor, 2005) and it has been used as an instrument in evaluating *Incredible Years* programmes internationally, it must be acknowledged that key limitations exist. Fundamentally, the SDQ instrument is a tool that relies heavily on teacher and parent self-reporting mechanisms that are highly subjective in nature. The evaluation team would recommend the adoption of complementary instruments in future evaluations that allow for the collection of impartial, objective data – which may be in the form of observation tools. Additionally, although the evaluation attempted to assess change over a period of time by employing the SDQ instruments, without the use of experimental approaches involving a comparison group (for example, a randomised control trial), it is not possible to scientifically compare the achievement of outcomes by children engaging with *Incredible Years* programmes against a sample who are not engaged.

A second limitation was that the SDQ currently requests that participants rate their child on 25 items using a 3-point scale (ranging from 'not true', to 'somewhat true', to 'certainly true'). Although the SDQ is an internationally recognised child-behaviour rating questionnaire (Goodman, 1999; Goodman et al., 2000), the evaluation team would suggest that a more defined and specific rating scale (perhaps incorporating a 5- / 7- / 10-point scale) would provide more detailed and precise data (Dawes, 2008). This is something that future evaluators should consider in conjunction with evaluation funders.

And finally, a further limitation was the low level of participant input into the evaluation. Although parents completed the pre- and post-programme SDQs, and the Parent Demographic Form, neither their qualitative voices nor the voices of the children participating in the programmes were accessed by the evaluation team. Although it was not within the scope of this current evaluation, the evaluation team would recommend that any future evaluations should include the voices of those people affected by and participating in the

Incredible Years Limerick programmes. This would ensure an accurate and first-hand representation of their experiences.

1.4   Report Structure

The report consists of seven chapters in total. Chapter 2 outlines, in detail, the *Incredible Years* programmes. Chapter 3 contextualises the *Incredible Years Limerick* programme by providing an overview of Limerick City and of research relevant to child behaviour and social needs. Chapter 4 provides an outline of the families participating in the *Incredible Years Limerick* programmes, while Chapter 5 details the findings relative to the 'programme management' element. Chapter 6 outlines the main findings relative to the 'programme impact' element of the evaluation, and the final chapter, Chapter 7, draws the evaluation together, providing a set of conclusions, identifying strengths and weaknesses and setting out recommendations for the future development of *Incredible Years Limerick*.

Chapter 2: The *Incredible Years Limerick* Programme Model

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the *Incredible Years* programme model, describing the three types of programme in detail. The chapter also contains information pertaining to *Incredible Years Limerick* funding sources for the period 2007 to June 2010.

2.2 *Incredible Years* Programmes

The *Incredible Years* programme was conceived as a response to parenting, family, child and school risk factors related to child conduct problems, with a focus on building parental capacities to address such conduct problems (Webster-Stratton and Reid, 2003b: 225). The programme was developed in a context where particular concerns about high levels of oppositional defiant disorder and conduct disorder (especially in low income families) were evident (Webster-Stratton and Hammond, 1997). Webster-Stratton and Hammond, (ibid.) identified "early years" intervention as the most effective approach in the prevention of conduct disorder and poor parenting skills were identified as a strong contributory factor in the development of such a disorder.

For this reason, the Parenting Clinic at the University of Seattle, Washington, set about developing a parent programme to improve parenting skills. Although this programme initially focussed on parents of children who were assessed at clinical levels of conduct disorder, it later targeted parents of children who were not in the clinical range of conduct disorders, but who were still deemed to benefit from the parenting programme (Webster-Stratton et al., 2004). Following the successful development of the parenting programme, the *Incredible Years* (as the project had become known) set about developing child-focused programmes that taught problem-solving and social skills directly to children.

The latest evolution of the *Incredible Years* programmes now includes a parent programme, a teacher/classroom programme and an individual child programme. Each of these programmes is described in detail below. Table 4, below, outlines the individual *Incredible Years* programmes under each target group.

Table 4: *Incredible Years* Programmes		
Parent Programmes	**Child Programmes**	**Teacher Programmes**
➢ Basic Parent Programme ➢ Advanced Parent Programme ➢ School Readiness Programme ➢ Infant and Parent Programme ➢ Toddler and Parent Programme	➢ Small Group Dina Programme ➢ Dina in the Classroom Programme	➢ Teacher Classroom-Management Programme

2.2.1 Incredible Years Parent Programmes

The following section describes each of the parenting programmes that were developed by *Incredible Years*, they are:

1. Basic Parent Programme,
2. Advanced Parent Programme,
3. School Readiness Programme,
4. Infant and Parent Programme, and
5. Toddler and Parent Programme

2.2.1.1 Basic Parent Programme

The Basic Parent Programme employs a multi-media approach - mixing video presentation of common parenting difficulties with group discussion and role-play under the guidance of a trained facilitator. It is designed to:

- Increase positive parenting, self-confidence and parent-child bonding;
- Teach parents to coach children's academic and verbal skills, persistence and sustained attention, and social and emotional development;
- Decrease harsh discipline and increase positive strategies such as ignoring bad behaviour, logical consequences, redirecting, monitoring, and problem solving;
- Improve parents' problem solving skills, anger management and communication;
- Increase family support networks and school involvement/bonding;
- Help parents and teachers to work collaboratively; and
- Increase parents' involvement in children's academic-related activities at home.

The programme was initially delivered, in several trials, within the confines of the Parenting Clinic at the University of Seattle, Washington. However, following the success of the programme, it was later adapted for delivery in community health centres and other locations. The results obtained in these environments displayed similar findings to those obtained in the university trials (Scott et al., 2001).

2.2.1.2 Advanced Parent Programme

The Advanced Parent Programme follows the same methodology as the Basic Parent Programme and complements it by including elements designed to support parents' personal self-control, to develop their communication and problem-solving skills, and to strengthen social support and self-care among participating parents.

2.2.1.3 School Readiness Programme

The School Readiness Programme was originally designed to be an adjunct to the Basic and Advanced Parent programmes. It is delivered to groups of parents who have ideally completed the Basic Parent Programme. The programme consists of 4 to 6 interactive video modelling sessions (Webster-Stratton and Reid, 2003b: 227). The focus of the sessions is on supporting parents to promote children's self-confidence, foster good learning habits, deal with children's discouragement (problem-solving), participate in homework, and build good relationships with teachers and the child's school.

2.2.1.4 Infant and Parent Programme and Toddler and Parent Programme

The infant and toddler programmes are aimed at supporting parents and at building "*optimal parenting skills*" (Incredible Years, 2009). The infant (birth to 12 months) and parent programme is delivered in six parts and includes getting to know how to read and respond to infants' cues. It also focuses on developing nurturing skills and in providing appropriate stimulation for the infant. The different elements of the programme include:

- Part 1 - Getting to Know Your Baby (birth to 3 months)
- Part 2 - Babies as Intelligent Learners (3-6 months)
- Part 3 - Providing Physical, Tactile and Visual Stimulation
- Part 4 - Parents Learning to Read Babies' Minds
- Part 5 - Gaining Support
- Part 6 - Babies' Emerging Sense of Self (6-12 months).

The toddler and parent programme is aimed at parents of children aged from 1 to 3 years and the 8-part programme is focused on "…*strengthening positive and nurturing parenting skills*" (Incredible Years, 2009). The 8 elements included in the programme are:

- Part 1 - Child-Directed Play Promotes Positive Relationships
- Part 2 - Promoting Toddler's Language with Child-Directed Coaching
- Part 3 - Social and Emotion Coaching
- Part 4 - The Art of Praise and Encouragement
- Part 5 - Spontaneous Incentives for Toddlers

- Part 6 - Handling Separations and Reunions
- Part 7 - Positive Discipline-Effective Limit Setting
- Part 8 - Positive Discipline-Handling Misbehaviour.

The infant and toddler programmes were running in Limerick at the time of the evaluation but were not included in the evaluation[8].

2.2.2 Incredible Years Child Programmes

The following section describes the Child Programmes, as developed by *Incredible Years*. They are the:

1. Small Group Dina Programme, and
2. Dina in the Classroom Programme.

2.2.2.1 Small Group Dina Programme

This programme is aimed at teachers and children and may be delivered in a school or community health-care setting. It is also known as 'Dinosaur School', and is an early intervention strategy for the prevention of child conduct disorder and, according to Scott et al. (2001), reducing the risk of educational and relationship difficulties in adult life.

Small Group Dina is a social skills programme designed to offset social skill deficits in children at risk of developing conduct disorder. The programme employs video vignettes and life size puppets to aid delivery, and can be delivered in 18 to 20 two-hour sessions. The curriculum covers: making friends, new school rules, understanding feelings, problem-solving and how to talk to friends.

The facilitator of the programme, according to Webster-Stratton and Reid (2003a), should have experience of working with children with conduct disorders or early onset conduct problems. Facilitators receive training in the content and methods of the treatment programme and the programme is supported by: (i) a manual that describes the content of the sessions i.e. the objectives of the session, and (ii) videos to be shown and the small-group activities. It is important that fidelity to the programme is maintained, which is monitored through session-by-session protocols and checklists for each unit. The facilitators promote the transfer of skills learned in Small Group Dina to other environments through the use of praise and through coaching of pro-social behaviours during less structured activities.

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[8] Given that the SDQs were not appropriate evaluation instruments for these programmes, a decision was taken by the Incredible Years Evaluation Sub-Group to evaluate these programmes at a later date.

Teachers and parents are asked to watch for and reinforce specific skills whenever they observe them (Webster-Stratton and Reid, 2003a: 138).

2.2.2.2 Dina in the Classroom Programme

The school-based Dina in the Classroom Programme is very similar in design to the Small Group Dina Programme and uses the same puppets and vignettes. It is delivered in the classroom as opposed to a small group and uses circle time as a teaching strategy. It requires two group leaders to facilitate and encourages division of the classroom group into smaller groups for activities.

Both of these child programmes are viewed as an adjunct to the parent programmes outlined earlier. While parent programmes are effective in most cases, there are circumstances where parents are unable to participate, to implement or to maintain the strategies delivered through the programme (Webster-Stratton and Reid, 2003a: 131). Additionally, the parent programmes focus on managing behaviour at home rather than at school.

However, Webster-Stratton and Reid (2003a: 131) highlight that parent training programmes do not include the teacher in the treatment plan, and similarly, pull-out treatments in school are often delivered with no input from parents - there needs to be collaboration between parents and teachers to "…*reinforce appropriate social behaviours…*" (ibid.: 132) based on what the individual child experiences in each environment.

2.2.3 Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management Programme

The Teacher Classroom Management Programme focuses on nurturing and developing teacher competencies and home-school connections. Its objectives are to:

- Strengthen teachers' effective classroom-management skills;
- Strengthen positive teacher-pupil relationships;
- Increase teachers' use of effective discipline strategies;
- Increase teachers' collaborations with parents and develop strategies to promote parents' involvement with the school;
- Increase teachers' ability to teach social skills, anger management and problem solving skills in the classroom; and
- Decrease levels of classroom aggression.

(Adapted from Webster-Stratton and Reid, 2003b: 229)

The programme is designed to promote effective teacher responses to child conduct problems in the classroom. It is a 32-hour programme targeting teachers' use of effective classroom management strategies and is delivered using activities and group discussions that relate to developing children's social skills, working effectively with parents and other professionals, and setting goals. The programme also provides teachers with strategies for dealing with misbehaviour, establishing positive relationships with difficult students, helping children to develop appropriate problem-solving strategies and emotional literacy. The focus of the Teacher Classroom Management Programme is on encouragement and praise, motivation through incentives and preventing problems.

2.3 Programme Fidelity

Webster-Stratton and Reid (2010) emphasise that successful implementation of the *Incredible Years* programmes requires fidelity to the programme manual during delivery:

> " *...delivering the programme with fidelity predicts change in both parent-reported and observed parenting skills, which in turn, predicts change in child behaviour outcomes*" (ibid.: 29).

However, the authors recognise that every group is unique and provide guidance on maintaining fidelity in programme delivery. The authors highlight four main principles to that maintenance, they are:

1. Core content and the minimum number of sessions must be presented to all groups;
2. Group learning methods such as behavioural practice or role plays must be used;
3. Group building techniques such as leader praise, group support, enthusiasm and reinforcement are fundamental to fidelity; and
4. Group leaders must make decisions on adapting the programmes to meet the needs of particular groups and to remove barriers to engagement with the programme.

Adaptations can include lengthening the *Incredible Years* programme by increasing the number of sessions, supplementing the sessions with additional *Incredible Years* programmes and choosing vignettes that are appropriate to the situation and also culturally appropriate. Adaptations should not include a reduction in core content or to the minimum number of sessions (Webster-Stratton and Reid, 2010: 29).

2.4 Evaluations of the *Incredible Years* Programmes

The parent, child and teacher programmes are designed to be complementary to one another. In 2004, Webster-Stratton et al. conducted trials with groups of children that compared the employment of a single programme against a combination of programmes. They found that a combination of the Basic Parent Programme and the Teacher Classroom Management Programme resulted in greater improvements (among the children) in classroom and social behaviour, than did the implementation of a single programme in isolation (Webster-Stratton et al., 2004).

Other evaluations and experimental trials of the programmes provide evidence to support claims made for the efficacy of the programmes - in both short and long term evaluations (e.g. Scott et al., 2001; O'Reilly, 2005; Hutchings et al., 2007). In describing the outcomes of *Incredible Years*, O'Reilly (2005: 68) highlights that the Basic Parent Programme leads to significant treatment effects among self-referred families. The benefits experienced by families in their study included: increased positive affect (interpersonal interactions in the family), decreased lead-taking and dominant behaviours in mothers, and a reduction in non-compliant and aggressive behaviours in children. Their research also evidenced improved parenting skills. Research from the Parenting Centre in Seattle has shown that combining the Basic Parent Programme with the Advanced Parent Programme resulted in the children displaying increased pro-social solutions in problem solving, and the parents displaying improved communicative and problem solving skills (Webster-Stratton et al., 2004).

Scott et al. (2001) in their examination of whether a behaviourally-based group parenting programme, delivered in regular clinic practice, is an effective treatment for addressing anti-social behaviour in children, found that the delivery of the *Incredible Years* programmes in group contexts, effectively reduces serious anti-social behaviour in children in real life conditions. They report that delivering the *Incredible Years* parent programmes in [health] clinics, with follow-up activities at home (in the form of observed homework tasks) proved effective in improving child behaviour. The authors drew on parent reports (gathered through semi-structured interviews), parent-completed Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (Goodman, 1997) and the Child Behaviour Checklist (Achenbach, 1991) as measurement instruments. The authors concluded that this intervention was "…*an effective, evidence based treatment for anti-social behaviour in children in real life conditions*" (Scott et al., 2001: 5). They added that it worked well with disadvantaged families and was similar in cost to conventional treatment. Scott et al. (2001) suggested that follow-up was required "…*to see if the children's poor prognosis is improved and criminality prevented*" (ibid.: 7). Finally, they suggested that the programme could be delivered in

community settings rather than mental health clinics, in order to increase accessibility and to reduce stigma (ibid: 9).

In 2007, the Teacher Classroom Management Programme was delivered in schools in North Wales. Evaluative results illustrated that teachers considered the programme useful. This particular evaluation also gathered structured classroom observation data, which displayed statistically different results between teachers trained in the programme and teachers not trained in the positive discipline strategies (Hutchings et al., 2007). Other research (McMahon, 2008) evaluated the outcomes of a Teacher Classroom Management Programme in an Irish primary school and also discovered that teachers rated the programme as highly useful. A measureable effect on children's SDQ scores was evident through this evaluation, i.e. decreases were evident in the conduct problems scale, and increases were evident in the pro-social scale. McMahon (ibid.) also reported increases in positive discipline strategies used by teachers.

2.5 Funding

This section profiles the funding sources that support *Incredible Years Limerick*. The *Incredible Years Limerick* programme is not guaranteed by regular or set funding contributions. Rather it is financially supported through once-off funding sources, which have to be sourced on an annual basis. The principal funding of *Incredible Years Limerick* over the period December 2007 to June 2010 was sourced from the following agencies:

- HSE
- Pobal Local Development Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP)
- Pobal Dormant Accounts
- St. Munchin's
- Atlantic Philanthropies
- Limerick Regeneration.

2.5.1 Estimating Costs and Benefits

Although the current evaluation has attempted to assess change over a period of time - by employing instruments that track subjective interpretations of change - without the use of experimental approaches involving a comparison group (for example, a randomised control trial), it is not possible to scientifically compare the achievement of outcomes by children engaging with *Incredible Years* programmes against those who are not engaged. Nor is it possible to comparably quantify the degree of their impact, for example; positive

improvements in a child's pro-social and co-operative behaviours and reductions in disruptive and confrontational behaviours. Without access to this information, it is not possible to assess the cost of programme benefits. However, it can be argued that if it is the case that *Incredible Years Limerick* is working with the 'right' children who are at high risk of being referred to state services e.g. Clinical Psychology Services, and if it is succeeding in its work, the cost savings may be readily apparent. This is so both in relation to an annual intervention and possible future costs. We must consider that, at present, no longitudinal data exists relative to the long-term outcomes that emerge as a result of engaging with *Incredible Years Limerick*. The availability of such data would provide a much clearer picture of the financial and social ramifications of the programme.

2.6 Chapter Summary

A review of the *Incredible Years* programmes illustrates that these interventions are firmly rooted in research on conduct difficulties in young children. The programmes focus on prevention as much as on treatment, and are transitioning from exclusive delivery in psychiatric and mental health contexts to community and educational settings (especially in disadvantaged contexts) as a response to a high-incidence of conduct problems. The chapter also provided the reader with an overview of *Incredible Years Limerick*'s funding sources.

Chapter 3: Contextualising *Incredible Years Limerick*

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the context of *Incredible Years Limerick*, firstly through a geographic and demographic profile of Limerick City and secondly through a review of relevant literature. The literature concerns children's behaviour, misbehaviour and the outcomes and impact associated with early onset conduct disorders.

3.2 Profiling Limerick City

Limerick City is located in the County of Limerick, on the Western sea-board of the island of Ireland. It is considered to be the manufacturing, commercial, administrative, historical and cultural capital of the mid-west region of the country, and is an important centre of higher education in Ireland with a number of third-level institutions of learning e.g. Mary Immaculate College (MIC), the University of Limerick (UL) and Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT). After Dublin, Cork and Galway, Limerick city is the fourth most populous city in the Republic of Ireland with a population of 52,539 (Central Statistics Office (CSO), 2006a). On March 1st, 2008 the boundaries of the city were extended when the *Limerick City Boundary Alteration Order, 2008* (cited in: Rabbitts, 2008) came into effect. This extension added an area of approximately 1,020 hectares to the city (which were previously part of County Limerick) and increased: (i) the city's area by almost 50%, and (ii) the population of the city by an estimated 7,000 inhabitants (Rabbitts, 2008). Figure 1 across illustrates the geographical location of Limerick County within Ireland.
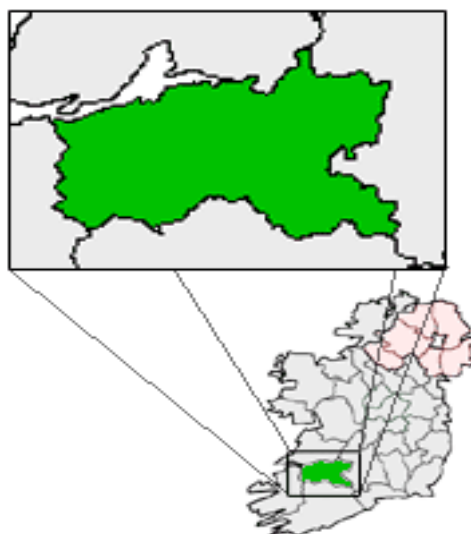
Figure 1: Geographic Location of Limerick County

In 2006, following a series of criminal and anti-social incidents in Limerick City, Mr. John Fitzgerald (former Dublin City Manager) was appointed by the Government of Ireland to review the situation in a number of housing estates in the city. He was requested to report back on possible solutions to the difficulties being experienced by communities living there. In February 2007, Mr. Fitzgerald presented his final report to the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion (chaired by An Taoiseach) and the report was published in March of that

year (Fitzgerald, 2007). That report now forms the basis for the Limerick Regeneration Programme 2009-2018. Overall the Fitzgerald report recommended that issues of social exclusion in Limerick City be addressed through a three-pronged approach, encompassing:

- Criminality
- Economic and infrastructural regeneration, and
- Social and educational development.

For the purpose of the current report, the social and educational development element is most relevant. In particular, the report recommends that local schools should be supported, through the Department of Education and Science (DES) (sic)[9], to:

> "…*address educational disadvantage…* [and provide] *a comprehensive and range of services to pupils both during and outside school hours… to address how educational welfare, before and after-school activities, and psychological and counselling services can be provided in a focused way to those who need it*" (Fitzgerald, 2007).

This is of great relevance to *Incredible Years Limerick*, which proactively aims to support and reinforce children's pro-social and co-operative behaviours, while discouraging disruptive and confrontational behaviours. This in turn, aims to tackle educational disadvantage among children experiencing behavioural difficulties, while also preventing referral to professional psychological and counselling services. In addition, the multi-agency approach of the *Incredible Years Limerick* Strategic Steering Group (on which Limerick Regeneration are represented), sits comfortably within Fitzgerald's recommended framework to tackle social and educational difficulties in Limerick City.

At the time of the evaluation, the most current census figures available to the evaluation team refer to the calendar year 2006 i.e. during which Ireland was experiencing financial prosperity. In contrast, for the period of the *Incredible Years Limerick* evaluation (March – June 2010), the Irish state was experiencing financial recession. Therefore, the reader must be mindful of the fact that the figures outlined within this section span two decades i.e. the 1990s and the 2000s, within which the state generally experienced financial prosperity. As a result, the figures contained herein may have risen or fallen as a result of economic adversity. The next national census is due to take place in 2011 - until that date the figures contained here are the most current figures available.

Throughout the Irish economic upturn (1999-2007) Limerick had higher levels of unemployment than other cities in Ireland. The 2006 Census figures show that while unemployment rates in the Irish Republic as a whole were at levels of 8.5% of the

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9 In mid-2010 the Department of Education and Science, Ireland changed its name to the Department of Education and Skills.

population, Limerick experienced unemployment levels of 14.6% (CSO, 2006a). The high levels of unemployment were complemented by some of the most disadvantaged areas in the country as a whole and one of the highest percentages of public housing among local authorities at 41% of the population (McCafferty, 2005). The city also displayed low levels of educational attainment with 10% of the city's population leaving school 'at or under 15 years' (11% among males and 9% among females), compared to national figures of 7.6% (8.2% among males and 7% among females) (CSO, 2006a). This is compounded by the fact that 22% of Limerick's population have 'no formal education'/ 'primary school level only', which is over 3% higher than national figures (CSO, 2006a).

Limerick city comprises 37 Electoral Divisions (EDs)[10], of which 21 are relevant to the current evaluation (see Table 5 below for an indication of the relevant EDs). Given that *Incredible Years Limerick* spans such a large number of EDs, the city-wide census statistics have been analysed and included in this current section.

Table 5: *Incredible Years Limerick* - Electoral Divisions and Relative Deprivation Index Scores[11] (Census 2006)			
IY Communities / Parishes	Electoral Divisions	Relative Deprivation Index Score	Deprivation Label
St. Munchin's	Kileely A	-31.8	Extremely disadvantaged
	Kileely B	-19.9	Disadvantaged
	Castle A	+6.1	Marginally above average
	Castle B	+12.0	Affluent
Southill	Galvone B	-46.6	Extremely disadvantaged
	Rathbane	-30.9	Extremely disadvantaged
	Shannon B	-5.3	Marginally below average
St. Mary's	Johns A	-60.7	Extremely disadvantaged
	Johns B	-27.5	Very disadvantaged
	Johns C	-6.6	Marginally below average
Moyross	Ballynanty	-32.3	Extremely disadvantaged
Our Lady of Lourdes	Ballinacurra B	-6.4	Marginally below average
	Prospect A	-29.3	Very disadvantaged
	Prospect B	-15.4	disadvantaged
	Glentworth C	-48.1	Extremely disadvantaged
	Glentworth B	-15.4	Disadvantaged
Our Lady Queen of Peace	Galvone A	-23.1	Very disadvantaged
	Glentworth B	-15.4	Disadvantaged
	Rathbane	-30.1	Extremely disadvantaged
	Singland A	-17.4	Disadvantaged
Limerick City	Dock A[12]	-2.4	Marginally below average

10 An Electoral Division (ED) is the smallest geographic area for which census data from the 2006 Census is publicly available in Ireland.

11 The Relative Index Score represents the level of affluence or deprivation in an area relative to all other areas at a particular point in time and it is the score that is most frequently used when talking about area-based deprivation. Relative Deprivation Score range from -30 or below (extremely disadvantaged) to +30 or above (extremely affluent).

12 The Limerick Social Services Centre, to which the Limerick City Parish/Community refers, is physically located within the Electoral Division – Dock A. However, the Centre has a city- and county-wide remit.

In 2006, Limerick City had a population of 59,790; a decline of 1.9% from 60,955 in 2002 (CSO, 2006b; CSO, 2002). At that time (2006) 51% of the population were female and 49% were male. In consideration of the age-bracket with which *Incredible Years Limerick* engages, 18% of the population of Limerick City were aged 14 years and under in 2006 (CSO, 2006b), i.e. primarily of primary school age. Of the 22,177 households in Limerick City in 2006, 14,479 (65%) comprised family units. Of those family units, 5,986 (41%) had one or more children under the age of 15 years. In 2006, 38.6% of the households with one or more children aged 15 years and under in Limerick City were headed by lone parents (CSO, 2006b). In 2006, 22% of the Limerick City population aged over 15 years had attained either 'no formal' education or 'primary education only'; with 24.7% attaining lower second-level, 20.8% upper second-level, 8.6% technical or vocational education, and 23.9% third level (CSO, 2006b). With regard to employment levels in the city, 8.1% of the population of Limerick City were unemployed/first-time job-seekers in 2006, with 48.8% classified as being 'at work' and the remaining 43.1% falling within the categories 'student' / 'home duties' / 'retired' / 'unable to work' / 'other' (CSO, 2006b).

In terms of disadvantage, the relative index scores as calculated by Haase and Pratschke (2008) outline the levels of deprivation/affluence of any one area relative to all other areas at that point in time e.g. 2006 census year. The index scores range from -30 (extremely disadvantaged) to +30 (extremely affluent). Table 6 below outlines the relative index scores for Ireland and Limerick city respectively, for the years 1991, 1996, 2002 and 2006. As outlined earlier, this period was an era of relative financial and economic prosperity in Ireland, which the reader should consider when reviewing the figures below.

Table 6: Relative Index Scores – Ireland and Limerick City		
Census Year	**Divisions**	
	Ireland	**Limerick City**
1991	2.3	-2.4
1996	3.0	-1.9
2002	3.3	-4.0
2006	2.1	-7.9

These scores are visually represented on the line graph below (Figure 2), where one can view the progression (be it positive/negative) for each respective district over the fifteen year period. Ireland's level of deprivation/affluence remained relatively static over that period of time (ranging from +2.3 in 1991 to +2.1 in 2006) while Limerick also remained relatively static from 1991 (-2.4) to 1996 (-1.9), but started to decline between 1996 (-1.9) and 2002 (-

4), and declined even more drastically between 2002 and 2006 (-4 to -7.9 respectively) (Haase and Pratschke, 2008).
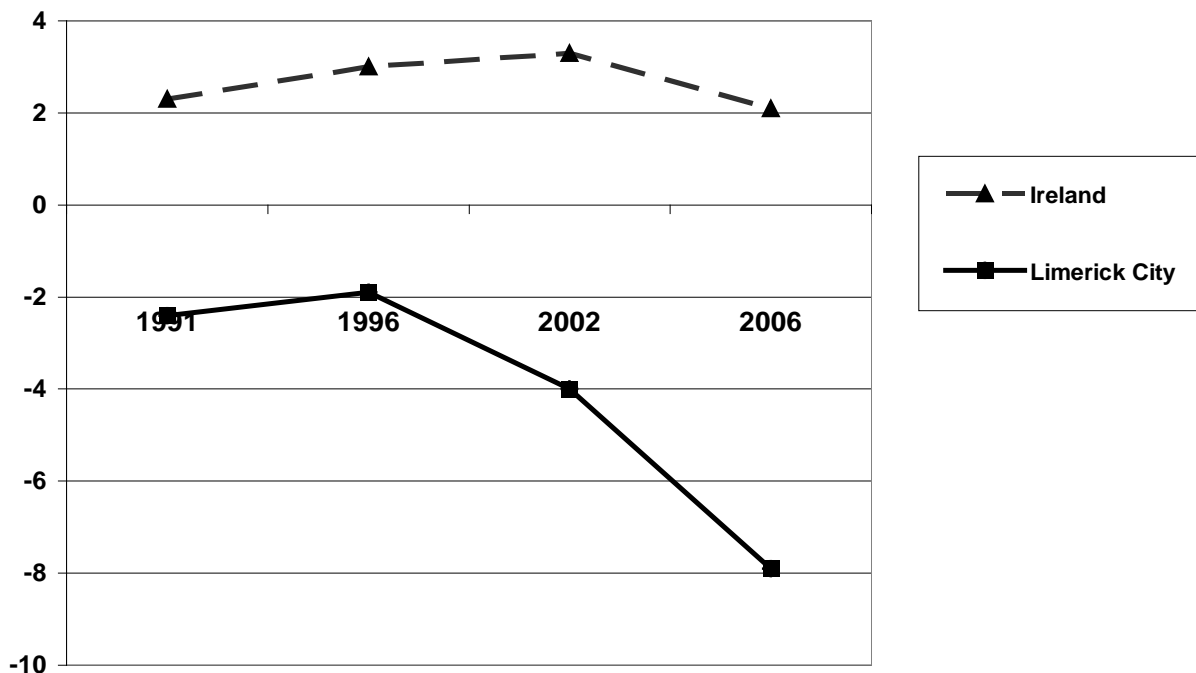
Figure 2: Relative Index Score – Ireland and Limerick City

3.3 Children's Behaviour Difficulties: Factors, Outcomes and Intervention

Managing children's behaviour can be a challenge for parents, guardians and teachers. Research supports this to an extent, for example, O'Reilly (2005) highlights that levels of conduct disorder as high as 6% have been found in a number of studies, in a variety of populations. This is in addition to identifiable at-risk populations of children where factors such as poverty, neglectful parenting and lack of resilience factors may combine to increase the likelihood of children exhibiting challenging behaviours such as non-compliance, aggression towards peers or adults and anti-social behaviour (Kazdin and Weisz, 2003; Fitzsimons et al., 2008). This section will examine research related to:

(i)   Definitions and prevalence of problem behaviour,

(ii)   Factors associated with problem behaviour,

(iii)   Outcomes associated with problem behaviour, and

(iv)   Intervention and prevention of problem behaviour.

3.3.1 Definitions and Prevalence of Problem Behaviour

The range of behaviour difficulties exhibited by children is extensive (American Psychiatric Association (APA), 1994). Ordinary mischief and occasional lapses in self-control leading to interpersonal aggression are exhibited by most children at some time (Friedman et al., 1996). However, these behaviours can still be regarded as challenging when they occur in contexts where they are inappropriate. An examination of literature on children's behaviour presents a variety of terms that can be used to describe and define undesirable behaviour ranging from misbehaviour, aggression, and challenging behaviour (Lyons et al., 2006) to labels such as oppositional defiant behaviour and conduct disorder (APA, 1994). In order to understand behaviour in all its complexity it is important to look beyond the labelling of a child and to explore the child's ecological context (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Patterson et al., 2002; Lyons et al., 2006).

In terms of defining a child's behaviour as challenging, the Psychological Society of Ireland have established a set of criteria that, when one or more are satisfied, the behaviour may be viewed as challenging. Those criteria are:

- The behaviour itself or its severity is inappropriate given the individual's age and level of development,
- The behaviour is physically harmful to the individual or to others,
- The behaviour constitutes a significant additional handicap for the individual by interfering with the learning of new skills or by excluding the individual from important learning opportunities, and
- The behaviour causes significant stress to the lives of those who work with the individual, and impairs the quality of their lives to an unreasonable degree.

(Psychological Society of Ireland, 1998: 18 (as cited in Lyons et al., 2006))

The American Psychiatric Association's clinical definitions of problem behaviour focus on the symptoms of the behaviour, and use labels such as Conduct Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder and Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (APA, 1994). In family and school contexts undesirable behaviour is more usefully defined as "challenging" where the principal difficulty with the behaviour is often the child's non-compliance with adult requests (Lyons et al., 2006). This non-compliance often leads to confrontation between teacher/parents and child - with possible escalation into an aggressive response by the child. Consistent aggression, non-compliance and lack of appropriate interpersonal responses can have a negative effect on children's relationships with their parents/carers, teachers and peers.

Long-term effects can lead to isolation and to a child being more likely to become involved in criminal activity and substance abuse in adolescence (Webster-Stratton and Reid, 2003a).

O'Reilly (2005) found that studies differed in their measurement of behavioural deviance, as well as in their use of criteria for inclusion. It was not surprising, therefore, that rates of prevalence differed across studies (O'Reilly, 2005). Nonetheless, he found that studies in London, the Isle of Wight and New Zealand all reported similar rates of 6% of high-level behaviour deviance in children. In a comparison between studies of rural and urban children, O'Reilly found that more than three-times the percentage of urban children in an Irish urban environment (35%) were rated as behaviourally deviant, as against their counterparts in an Irish rural environment where just 11% were rated as behaviourally deviant. In London and the Isle of Wight, more than double the amount of urban children were rated as behaviourally deviant (25%) compared to their rural counterparts (12%).

It has been suggested that low income, parental disengagement with education and ineffective parenting may be factors in the prevalence of emotional and behavioural problems, particularly in areas of social disadvantage (Lyons et al., 2006: 21). Studies have indicated that disadvantaged populations have a high incidence of conduct disorders and that teachers in schools in socially disadvantaged areas report more serious and aggressive behaviour (Lynch, 1999; DES, 2006). While it must be stated that such evidence does not imply that all children living in socially disadvantaged conditions develop behavioural difficulties, it is nonetheless true that the prevalence of emotional and behavioural difficulties seem to be higher in areas of social disadvantage (Lyons et al., 2006: 392).

3.3.2 Contributory Factors Associated with Problem Behaviour

The root causes of conduct disorders have been studied extensively and some of the factors that contribute to the development of challenging behaviour have been identified. Webster-Stratton and Reid (2003a), for example, have identified five key factors that are associated with increased risk of developing conduct disorders:

- Ineffective parenting e.g. inconsistent or harsh discipline, low parental involvement in school activities,
- Family factors e.g. marital conflict, depression, drug abuse among parents,
- Child biological and developmental risk factors e.g. learning disabilities, temperamental characteristics, developmental delays,

43

- School risk factors e.g. classroom level of aggression, little emphasis on explicit teaching of social and emotional competence, little differentiation in the curriculum, and

- Peer and community risk factors e.g. poverty and gangs.

Patterson et al. (1992) found that parents had a causal role in maintaining anti-social behaviour because they responded to this kind of behaviour by giving attention to the child and also had a role in extinguishing desirable behaviour by ignoring it (cited in Scott et al., 2001: 1).

3.3.3 Outcomes Associated with Problem Behaviour

Concerns about young children who exhibit problem behaviour are focused not just on the immediate effects of the behaviour, but also on the long-term effects and the eventual outcome of childhood behaviour disorders. Scott et al. (2001) highlighted that persistent and poorly controlled anti-social behaviour is socially debilitating and can lead to later poor adjustment as adults. Additionally, Scott et al. (ibid.) highlighted that the early onset of conduct disorder is associated with hyperactivity and emotional problems in childhood and early adolescence and has a tendency to persist into adulthood.

The literature suggests that poor educational attainment can also be associated with persistent early onset of conduct disorder (Kazdin and Weisz, 2003). Webster-Stratton and Reid (2003b: 228) outline the pattern of relationships that develop alongside behaviour problems. They suggest that the aggressive child becomes excluded by peers, leading to a lack of opportunity to learn appropriate social skills. Additionally, rejection and exclusion may cause an increase in aggressive responses by the child, which can result in further estrangement from the peer group. Aggressive children may also have a poor relationship with teachers, which can lead to exclusion in the classroom and possibly the school – which in turn can result in school dropout, antisocial behaviour and/or involvement in substance abuse and crime (Webster-Stratton and Reid, 2003b).

In addition to educational attainment and school difficulties, the literature also highlights that family relationships can suffer when children exhibit behavioural difficulties (Eyberg and Brinkmeyer, 2003). While parenting factors can be seen as causal factors in the development of conduct disorders (Patterson et al., 1992), it can be equally true that negative parent and child relationships can maintain the behaviour patterns and in some cases can increase the likelihood of more severe disruptive behaviour developing (Eyberg and Brinkmeyer, 2003).

Children and adolescents can experience many different types of difficulties including learning disorders, attention deficit disorders, communication disorders, behaviour disorders, etc. Such disorders can be experienced concurrently and can emerge at many different points over the course of development (Kazdin and Weisz, 2003). Kazdin and Weisz suggest that "…*several million children and adolescents are in need of and could benefit from some intervention*" (Kazdin and Weisz, 2003: 9). The following section will briefly explore some of the interventions that target behavioural difficulties exhibited by children.

3.3.4 Intervention and Prevention of Problem Behaviour

The treatment and prevention of problem behaviour in childhood has a long-term goal of reducing the likelihood of future anti-social and aggressive behaviour with the consequent cost to the individual and society. Research highlights that, "…*preventing aggressive/antisocial behaviours is very attractive because these behaviours are so costly to society and so difficult to treat once they become chronic and entrenched within an individual*" (Connor, 2002: 342). Connor suggests that conduct problems, because they develop slowly and with a variety of risk factors involved over time, can be addressed through the implementation of prevention programmes and approaches.

Clarke and Clarke (2003) strongly suggest that it is possible to modify the life path of the child through intervention. They base this suggestion on the work of Kolvin et al. (1997, cited in Clarke and Clarke, 2003), who assert that protective factors such as intelligence, equable temperament, scholastic ability and social skills are key factors in modifying escape from disadvantage. From this assertion Clarke and Clarke conclude that:

> "…*one cannot necessarily take at face value and as of predictive accuracy personal levels measured in the context of seriously adverse past or present circumstances*" (ibid.: 389).

Clarke and Clarke suggest that:

> "…*early intervention typically yields concurrent advantages both for the child and the parents. Thereafter, as time passes, its effects are likely to follow the law of diminishing returns unless the intervention sets off an ongoing chain of consecutive positive influences*" (Clarke and Clarke, 2003: 329).

One example of such a positive outcome of an intervention was families who participated in early Head Start programmes in England. The parents of those children were more likely to

45

be proactive and involved in their children's schooling and with school activities, which led to higher than expected attainment for their children (Clarke and Clarke, 2003: 330).

In terms of designing intervention programmes, Reid et al. state that "…*an ecological framework is essential for designing interventions that address mental health problems*" (Reid et al., 2002: 257) and suggest that many interventions may be inaccessible to families and do not produce effects reliably in community settings. Reid et al.'s response to the need for interventions that focused on parents and the family dynamic was a programme entitled: *Adolescent Transition Program* (Reid et al., 2002). This programme was a family-based intervention in a school setting and aimed at developing increased communication between the parents and teachers which led to improved parenting as a result of greater awareness of school demands, risk factors and avoidance (ibid.).

Other research (Kazdin and Weisz, 2003; Webster-Stratton and Hammond, 1997) suggests that teaching explicit strategies in anger management, problem-solving and social skills to children was somewhat effective in reducing conduct problems. However, Webster-Stratton and Reid (2003b) questioned whether these effects were also evident in other settings, or even if the effects were long-term. Webster-Stratton and Hammond (1997) point out that the studies in this research involved non-clinical populations and were carried out in schools. It was unknown whether the strategies generalised (i.e., transferred successfully to the home or other contexts). Additional concerns that Webster-Stratton et al. (2004) expressed in relation to the *Adolescent Transition Program* related to the young people's age when the intervention began. Age has been identified as an important factor both in the emergence of conduct problems and in the delivery of effective interventions (Webster-Stratton et al., 2004). The earlier a child exhibits conduct problems the greater the risk of persistent anti-social behaviour in adulthood. Equally, the younger the child at the time of the intervention, the better the outcome and the likelihood that this positive outcome will be sustained and identified in a follow-up study (ibid.).

Webster-Stratton and Reid (2003a) state that children identified as having conduct problems at a young age are at increased risk of school dropout, substance abuse and delinquency in their later years. This is the rationale for the *Incredible Years*[13] early years treatment and prevention programmes (ibid)[14]. These programmes focus on training children in social skills, anger management and problem-solving skills and include interventions with parents

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13 Full information on www.incredibleyears.com

14 See Chapter 2 for a detailed description of the *Incredible Years* programme model.

and teachers as well as working directly with children. The programmes are often described as a curriculum and the latest versions contain elements on achieving success in school.

Scott et al. (2001) identified the *Incredible Years* parenting programme as an intervention that combines "…*behavioural principles with other features, such as sympathetic support that the literature shows enhance effectiveness*" (Scott et al., 2001: 5.). In 2001, Scott et al. implemented the *Incredible Years* Basic Parent Programme to examine the efficacy of a group parenting programme (delivered in regular health clinic practice) in the treatment of children displaying anti-social behaviour / tendencies. They discovered reduced rates of serious anti-social behaviour among children "…*in real life conditions…*" (ibid.: 5). They suggested that follow-up was needed "…*to see if the children's poor prognosis is improved and criminality prevented*" (Scott et al., 2001: 1).

In 2005, O'Reilly identified *Incredible Years* as a form of behavioural parent training. He highlights that *Incredible Years* differs significantly from other programmes because it is presented through a multi-media methodology and is aimed at groups rather than individual families. He outlines that the Basic Parent Programme is designed for parents of pre-school and early years' school-aged children, and that the programme emphasises the importance of play. The focus is on children's self-esteem, creativity and imagination, cooperation and problem solving skills. He adds that the early years' curriculum also includes material on praise and encouragement, tangible rewards, limit setting, ignoring negative behaviour, time-out and other consequences. The school-age curriculum, he attests, focuses on helping parents to promote self confidence, good learning habits, problem solving and to develop collaborative working with teachers. O'Reilly also suggests that the curriculum can be presented in a range of settings and by a wide range of practitioners (O'Reilly, 2005).

3.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided the reader with an overview of the context within which the evaluation is located. The chapter opened with a geographic and demographic overview of Limerick City, and then progressed to a review of relevant literature that contextualises the study academically. The review highlighted that conduct disorders and challenging behaviour exhibited by children are a concern and can have negative life-long outcomes for children that can also impact on society. Factors that affect the likelihood of developing conduct disorders have been identified and, where an ecological approach is considered, the focus of intervention is on the child's environment and particularly on family and school factors. Interventions based in family and school settings have been identified as being effective in modifying child behaviour.

Chapter 4: *Incredible Years Limerick* – Participating Parent Demographics

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides demographic information relating to the children and families who participated in the *Incredible Years Limerick* evaluation through the Basic Parent programme and Small Group Dina Programme. This information was gathered through a Participant Demographic Form (as contained in Appendix G). Similar data for children engaged in the Dina in The Classroom programme was not collected as a decision was taken by the Evaluation Sub-Group that it would not be feasible (due to time restraints) to request Group Leaders (i.e. classroom teachers) to collect demographic data on children in their classroom or on their parents. Information pertaining to the overall demographic context of the areas where the schools are based is contained in Chapter 3, Section 3.2 Table 5.

4.2 Parent Profile

The following profile of children and families who participated in the *Incredible Years Limerick* evaluation was developed through a Participant Demographic Form, which was designed and administered by PAUL Partnership to parents who participated in the Basic Parent Programme themselves, or whose children engaged with the Small Group Dina Programme. A total of 48 completed Participant Demographic Forms were returned. The findings are presented below.

4.2.1 Parent Profile: Gender and Age

As outlined above, 48 parents completed a Participant Demographic Form. Of those, 43 (90%) were female, 2 (4%) were male, and the remaining 3 (6%) did not identify their gender. As demonstrated in Table 7 below, all but one parent identified their age. The majority (38 parents / 79%) were aged between 25 and 44 years – thirty-five (92%) of whom were female.

Table 7: Parents' Gender by Parents' Age				
		Gender		
		Female	Male	Missing Answer	TOTAL
Age	18 – 24 Yrs	4	0	1	**5**
	25 – 44 Yrs	35	2	1	**38**
	45 – 64 Yrs	2	0	1	**3**
	65+ Yrs	1	0	0	**1**
	Missing Answer	1	0	0	**1**
	TOTAL	**43**	**2**	**3**	**48**

4.2.2 Parent Profile: Geographic Residence

As illustrated in Figure 3 below, the parents who participated in this aspect of the evaluation were dispersed across the seven parishes/communities within which *Incredible Years Limerick* was being administered at the time of the evaluation.
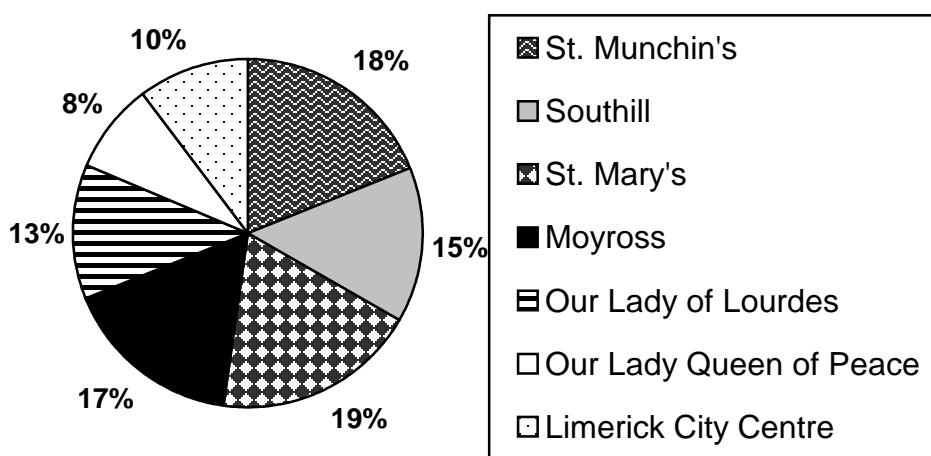
Figure 3: Parents' Geographic Location

4.2.3 Parent Profile: Marital Status and Number of Children

The most common marital status reported by respondents was "Single, Never Married" (20 / 46%). Thirteen (30%) of the parents were married, six (14%) were cohabiting, almost a tenth (9%) were separated and one was widowed.

Table 8: Parents' Gender by Marital Status (Crosstab)					
		Gender			
		Female	Male	Missing Answer	TOTAL
Marital Status	Single, Never Married	18	1	1	**20**
	Separated	3	1	0	**4**
	Cohabiting	5	0	1	**6**
	Widowed	1	0	0	**1**
	Married	12	0	1	**13**
	Missing Answer	4	0	0	**4**
	TOTAL	**43**	**2**	**3**	**48**

As outlined in Table 9 below, two of the parents specified that they had one child, 19 had two children, 19 had between three and five children and four had six or more children.

Table 9: Number of Children by Geographic Location (Crosstab)							
		Number of Children					
		1 Child	2 Children	3 – 5 Children	6 – 10 Children	Missing Answer	TOTAL
Geographic Location	St. Munchin's	0	3	3	0	3	**9**
	Southill	0	6	1	0	0	**7**
	St. Mary's	2	2	5	0	0	**9**
	Moyross	0	3	2	3	0	**8**
	Our Lady of Lourdes	0	2	4	0	0	**6**
	Our Lady Queen of Peace	0	1	2	0	1	**4**
	Limerick City	0	2	2	1	0	**5**
	TOTAL	**2**	**19**	**19**	**4**	**4**	**48**

4.2.4 Parent Profile: Ethnicity

A large majority of parents (38 / 79%) did not indicate their ethnicity. Eight (17%) classified themselves as being a member of an immigrant community, and one (2%) was a member of the travelling community.
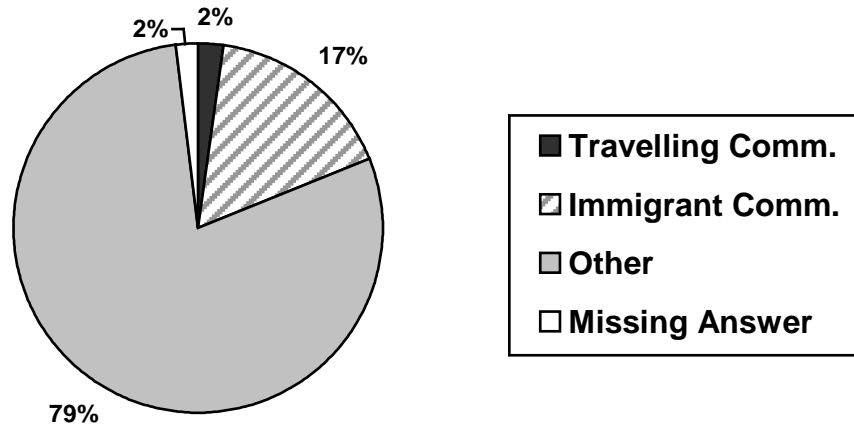
Figure 4: Parents' Ethnicity

4.2.5 Parent Profile: Education and Employment Status

Of the 44 valid responses to the Participant Demographic Form, almost a third (14) of parents specified that they were involved in home duties, while a quarter (11) indicated that they were unemployed. Six (14%) were currently in work full-time or part-time, 4 (9%) were part-time students, and 3 (7%) were unable to work due to an illness or disability.

Half the parents (22) had some secondary schooling – of those 22 parents, 4 (18%) were part-time students, 7 (32%) were engaged in home duties, and 8 (36%) were unemployed. Six (14%) parents had completed a post-leaving certificate or third level qualification.

		Highest Level of Education Completed						
		No Formal Education / Primary School	Some Secondary School	Leaving Cert.	Post Leaving Cert. / Third Level Qualification	Missing Answer	Invalid	TOTAL
Current Employment Status?	At Work - Full Time	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	At Work - Part Time	1	2	1	1	0	0	5
	Student - Part Time	0	4	0	0	0	0	4
	Unemployed	0	8	0	3	0	0	11
	Engaged in Home Duties	3	7	2	1	1	0	14
	Unable to Work due to Illness / Disability	0	1	1	0	1	0	3
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
	Missing Answer	0	0	1	0	4	0	5
	Invalid	1	0	2	1	0	0	4
TOTAL		5	22	8	6	6	1	48

Table 10: Parents' Education by Employment Status (Crosstab)

4.3 Child Profile

The parents who completed the Participant Demographic Form were also asked to complete questions pertaining to one of their children who was engaged in an *Incredible Years Limerick* programme.

4.3.1 Child Profile: Gender and Age

The majority of the children for whom valid demographic details were provided were male, 26 (59%) and the remainder were female, 18 (38%). Fifteen (34%) of the children were aged 6 years (7 female and 8 male). Nine (21%) children were aged 5 years (6 female and 3 male), and 7 (16%) were aged 7 years (2 female and 5 male).

Table 11: Child's Gender by Age				
		Gender of Child		
		Female	Male	Missing Answer / Invalid	TOTAL
Age of Child	4 yrs	1	3	0	4
	5 yrs	6	3	1	10
	6 yrs	7	8	1	16
	7 yrs	2	5	1	8
	8 yrs	1	2	0	3
	9 yrs	0	3	0	3
	10 yrs	1	2	0	3
	Invalid	0	0	1	1
TOTAL		18	26	4	48

4.3.2 Child Profile: Special Needs & Use of Professional Services

Parents were asked to identify whether their children had been assessed and diagnosed with particular special needs, and if so, whether that child was subsequently engaged with any professional services. An outline of the responses is presented in Tables 12 and 13 below. Of the 48 children about whom valid information is available, an overwhelming majority, 45 (94%) had been assessed and diagnosed with a specific learning difficulty e.g. Dyslexia. Six (13%) of the children had been assessed and diagnosed with a language delay, 4 (8%) children with a vision or hearing impairment, and 4 (8%) with an emotional or behavioural difficulty.

Table 12: Children Assessed & Diagnosed with a Special Need				
	Yes	**No**	**Missing Answer / Invalid**	**TOTAL**
Language Delay	6	39	3	**48**
Learning Delay	1	44	3	**48**
Physical Disability	1	44	3	**48**
ADHD[15]	1	44	3	**48**
Vision or Hearing Impairment	4	40	4	**48**
Specific Learning Difficulty[16]	45	0	3	**48**
Emotional or Behavioural Difficulty	4	41	3	**48**
Other	1	34	13	**48**

Table 13 below outlines the professional services being used by the children who had previously been identified as having a special need. Six children, who had been diagnosed with a special need at the time of the evaluation, were accessing Speech and Language services. Three were using the services of Enable Ireland, three were accessing a voluntary service e.g. Barnardos, two were accessing the Child and Mental Health Service, and two were accessing the HSE Social Work Department. It is not possible to specify what percentage of children was accessing professional services, as a number of children may have been accessing more than one service.

15 ADHD: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

16 For example, Dyslexia.

		Special Need Assessed & Diagnosed								
		Lang. Delay	Learn. Delay	Phys . Dis.	ADHD	Vision / Hearing Imp.	Spec. Learn. Diff.	Emot. / Beh. Diff.	Other	TOTAL
Prof. Service Being Used	HSE Clinical Psych.	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	**1**
	CAMHS[17]	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	**2**
	NEPS[18]	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
	Speech & Lang.	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	**6**
	CDC[19]	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
	Enable Irl.	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	**3**
	Early Int. Services	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
	Vol. Agency[20]	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	**3**
	HSE Social Work Dept.	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**2**
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
	TOTAL	**9**	**0**	**2**	**1**	**0**	**0**	**3**	**2**	**17**

Table 13: No. of Children Diagnosed with Special Needs by Professional Service Currently Being Used (Crosstab)

4.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the families who participated in the *Incredible Years Limerick* evaluation. Parents who participated in the Basic Parent Programme, or whose child had engaged with the Small Group Dina Programme were invited to complete the Participant Demographic Form. The findings of the questionnaire have been outlined in this chapter and include information pertaining to: familial geographical residence, parental age, gender, ethnicity, level of parental education and parental employment situation. Data relative to the child to whom the parent was referring were also gathered. This included the children's ages, gender, diagnosis of a special need and engagement with professional services.

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17 CAMHS: Child and Mental Health Service.

18 NEPS: National Educational Psychological Service.

19 CDC: Child Development Centre.

20 For example, Barnardos.

Chapter 5: *Incredible Years Limerick* Evaluation - Programme Management Findings

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter the findings from the programme management element of the *Incredible Years Limerick* evaluation are presented. These findings, which are largely qualitative in nature were derived from: (i) the semi-structured interviews and focus groups, delivered mid-way through the delivery of the *Incredible Years Limerick* programmes, and (ii) a survey questionnaire, administered upon completion of the programmes included in this evaluation.

5.2 Programme Management Findings

The programme management findings are largely qualitative in nature, and were gathered from:

i. Members of the *Incredible Years* Programme Operational Group (Group Leaders) - forty out of forty six group leaders participated in the evaluation. Group Leaders participated in 7 focus group discussions, 9 individual interviews, and 37 of this group also returned end of programme survey questionnaires,

ii. The *Incredible Years* Programme Staff i.e. Programme Manager, Training & Development Co-ordinator, Project Support Staff (2), Performance Monitoring Officer, and former *Incredible Years* programme manager. The Programme Staff participated through 6 individual interviews, and

iii. Members of the *Incredible Years* Strategic Steering Group, who participated through one focus group and 11 individual interviews.

Table 14 below outlines the respondents to the programme management element of the evaluation. Group Leaders are presented according to their roles in their organisations and comprise twenty-two teachers, five Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) four Home School Community Liaisons (HSCLs), four childcare/project workers, three agency managers and two psychologists. The Group Leaders participated in: focus groups, interviews (40 from a possible 46), and the survey questionnaire (twenty-one teachers, five SNAs, two HSCLs, four childcare/project workers, three agency managers and two psychologists (37 in total) responded to the survey questionnaire).

Table 14: Programme Management - Interview and Focus Group Respondents								
Group Leaders' Professional Roles						**IY Prog. Staff**	**Strategic Steering Group**	**Total**
Teacher	**SNA**	**HSCL**	**Project / Childcare Worker**	**Agency Manager**	**Psychol-ogist**			
22	5	4	4	3	2			
40						6	19	**65**
End of Programme Survey Questionnaire Respondents								
Teacher	**SNA**	**HSCL**	**Project / Childcare Worker**	**Agency Manager**	**Psychol-ogist**	**IY Prog. Staff**	**Strategic Steering Group**	
21	5	2	4	3	2			
37						0	0	**37**

The instruments used and the numbers of participants were:

i.   Focus Groups – were convened with members of the *Incredible Years* Strategic Steering Group (one focus group, with eight participants) and the Programme Operational Group (seven focus groups, with thirty-one participants in total),

ii.   Semi-Structured Interviews – were convened with *Incredible Years* Programme Staff (six interview participants), members of the *Incredible Years* Strategic Steering Group (eleven interview participants), and members of the Programme Operational Group (nine interview participants), and

iii.   End of Programme Survey Questionnaires – were administered to Group Leaders only. There were 37 respondents (twenty-one teachers, five SNAs, two HSCLs, four childcare/project workers, three agency managers and two psychologists).

All quotes contained within this report have been coded to protect participant anonymity. The letters 'PS' and a number have been used to signify an *Incredible Years* Programme Staff participant (e.g. PS01 to PS06). The Programme Operational Group (Group Leaders) is referred to by the letters 'GL' followed by a number (e.g. GL04). And finally, the Strategic Steering Group is indicated by 'SG' and a number (e.g. SG01).

Three key topics were explored during the interviews and focus groups (a copy of the interview and focus group schedules are contained in Appendices D and E). The three topics were, the:

- Development of *Incredible Years,*
- Management and implementation of *Incredible Years*, and

- Delivery of *Incredible Years*.

The data gathered through the interviews and focus groups were initially analysed to identify key themes. A basic coding process was utilised to easily identify the themes. These themes were then examined a second time and overarching themes into which the initial coded themes could be collapsed were identified. Seven key themes emerged as a result of the coding process, they were:

    i. Development of *Incredible Years*,

    ii. Management and implementation of *Incredible Years*,

    iii. Delivery of *Incredible Years*,

    iv. *Incredible Years* programme-specific concerns,

    v. Key strengths of the *Incredible Years* programme,

    vi. Key challenges of the *Incredible Years* programme, and

    vii. Key learning from the rollout of the *Incredible Years* programme in Limerick.

The end of programme survey questionnaire was developed using these key themes and consisted of yes/no questions followed by an open-ended question to allow respondents to expand their answers. The survey questionnaire explored the Group Leaders':

- Initial introduction to *Incredible Years,*
- Knowledge of the management and implementation of the wider programme in Limerick,
- Interaction with programme management elements such as: supports, materials, resources and communication, and
- Perspectives on how well the programme that they had delivered had met its objectives.

The findings from the focus groups, interviews and survey questionnaire are reported in this chapter under the seven headings/themes identified through the focus groups and interviews. Where appropriate, the stakeholder group will be identified under the relevant theme.

5.2.1 Development of Incredible Years Limerick

The following sub-themes emerged under the theme 'Development of *Incredible Years Limerick'* during the coding process:

    i. Introduction to *Incredible Years Limerick,*

    ii. *Incredible Years* training,

    iii. Awareness of rationale behind *Incredible Years Limerick*, and

iv.   Expectations of *Incredible Years Limerick.*

5.2.1.1 Introduction to *Incredible Years Limerick*

Strategic Steering Group: Among the Strategic Steering Group representatives the first introduction to *Incredible Years* had generally come about in the context of their work, often from colleagues in other geographical regions or as an item of interest directly related to their work. Most of the Strategic Steering Group representatives acknowledged that *Incredible Years* was one programme among many and that they considered the *Incredible Years* programme to offer more than other programmes, because of its three-pronged approach (see Chapter 2 for detailed information on the composition of the *Incredible Years* programme):

> *"So we thought it would be a way of galvanising a range of stakeholders who could begin to impact on the problem because that's what the research base was showing; that if we could work with parents and teachers… then we could impact on the children. A kind of holistic approach"* (SG03).

Several of the Strategic Steering Group representatives had read the *Incredible Years* research literature prior to adopting the programme and were aware of the reported outcomes. Therefore their expectations relating to the programme were based on this knowledge.

Programme Staff: The *Incredible Years* Programme Staff were introduced to *Incredible Years* through their work on the project. They added to their knowledge through:

- Reading *Incredible Years* research,
- Their involvement with distributing the resources and materials, and
- Their interaction with the programmes and settings in which they were being delivered.

Programme Operational Group: The Group Leaders were asked about their first introduction to *Incredible Years.* There was a wide variety of responses from this group. Thirty-six out of forty Group Leaders first learned about *Incredible Years* through their work context. In four schools the information on *Incredible Years* had come through a recommendation from the Principal or through a staff meeting. Representatives from two of the schools had first heard of the *Incredible Years* programme through a staff meeting, which was attended by a PAUL Partnership staff member who invited them to take part in *Incredible Years Limerick*. In two other schools, the representatives' first introduction to

Incredible Years had come through the *Working Together Project*[21]. Group Leaders from the Family Resource Centres and other agencies involved in delivery had all attended *Incredible Years* training, as organised by their managers. In some cases this training, and the delivery of *Incredible Years*, was part of their job description. Five teachers also stated that they had first heard of *Incredible Years* through the Primary Liaison with University Services (PLUS) network[22].

The survey questionnaire findings mirrored the data outlined above. All 37 Group Leaders had heard of *Incredible Years* through their work contexts. It was most often (21 out of 37 cases) a colleague or manager who initially introduced them to *Incredible Years.* However, 5 Group Leaders initially heard about *Incredible Years* through their involvement with the *Working Together Project* (see section 5.2.1.1 for more information on this project). Another 4 had heard of *Incredible Years* at PLUS meetings (see footnote no. 22 below) and 4 others identified PAUL Partnership as having introduced them to the programme.

In general, Group Leaders' views of the *Incredible Years* programmes were positive, particularly in relation to content, ethos, modular construction, ease of use and expected impact. Additionally, many Group Leaders indicated that they enjoyed delivering the sessions and that the children and parents found them enjoyable and fun, as well as learning experiences.

5.2.1.2 *Incredible Years* Training

Strategic Steering Group and Programme Staff: Four members of the Strategic Steering Group had attended training courses, as had two members of the Programme Staff. The Programme Staff felt that the training had been of benefit to them as it led to a greater awareness of the work that was being done by Group Leaders and of the objectives of the programmes:

> *"It was specifically in terms of me having an idea of the programme and how it works"* (PS02).

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21 The Working Together Project was a research project that was delivered in three Limerick schools from 2002 to 2006. The project promoted positive approaches to behaviour and was delivered by the TED Project in Mary Immaculate College. For further details see www.mic.ul.ie/ted/workingtogether.html

22 The PLUS network consists of a group of representatives from schools in Limerick City and County. These schools have been allocated DEIS Urban Band 1 status by the DES, i.e. heightened levels of urban disadvantage. The network is facilitated by TED project staff and meets on a monthly basis during the academic year.

Programme Operational Group: At the time of the evaluation thirty-eight of the forty participating Group Leaders had attended training courses relating to the delivery of *Incredible Years*. Most of the training related to the programme that the Group Leaders were currently delivering. The majority had been trained in Limerick within the two years of PAUL Partnership's involvement with the project. There were some teachers who had attended training in Wales or Dublin, prior to PAUL Partnership's involvement with *Incredible Years*.

In response to the survey questionnaire, all the participating Group Leaders had completed training in *Incredible Years*. Thirty-two Group Leaders had completed at least one *Incredible Years* training programme. Of those, 9 had attended Basic Parent Programme training and 8 had completed Small Group Dina Programme training. A further fifteen Group Leaders, all of whom were teachers, had trained in the Dina in the Classroom Programme. Three schools had completed whole-school training for the Teacher Classroom Management Programme and eleven Group Leaders outlined that they had completed training in more than one *Incredible Years* programme. The majority of this training had been supported by *Incredible Years Limerick,* with 5 Group Leaders having trained prior to PAUL Partnership's involvement.

5.2.1.3 Awareness of Rationale Behind *Incredible Years Limerick*

When asked why *Incredible Years* had been chosen for roll-out in Limerick City a number of Group Leaders responded with "*I honestly don't know"* (GL34). Some expanded on their answer and were prepared to speculate that the roll-out of *Incredible Years* was in response to well publicised social needs in Limerick City. They also expressed awareness that several organisations, such as the Limerick Regeneration Agencies, Mary Immaculate College (MIC) and PAUL Partnership were involved in administering the programme:

- *"I assume it's because there are huge social problems in the city and regeneration"* (GL30).
- *"Regeneration is behind/funding it"* (GL29).
- *"It had started in Mary I., I think. Someone in Mary I. initiated it in two schools and when Regeneration came it seemed to come from that. And it may have come from PAUL Partnership - always been involved in finding ways to support the disadvantaged communities here"* (GL31).

In their survey questionnaire responses 24 Group Leaders underlined these reasons, highlighting social needs and levels of disadvantage in Limerick (15 respondents); the fact that *Incredible Years* was an evidence-based programme (7); the DEIS status of the schools (8); the selection of *Incredible Years* as part of the education section of the Limerick

Regeneration plans (Limerick Regeneration, 2008) (3); the expected benefits from the programme (1); and previous positive experiences of the *Incredible Years* programme through the *Working Together Project* (1). The remaining 13 did not know why *Incredible Years* had been chosen for implementation in Limerick.

The Programme Staff and representatives of the Strategic Steering Group suggested that the *Incredible Years* programme had been selected because of the strong supporting evidence from research and the proven efficacy of the programmes in areas that were similar to Limerick in terms of needs and population statistics, as this quote illustrates:

> *"It had a track record. We have been supporting lots of things that don't have an evidence base but this was well supported with a lot of key stakeholders behind it nationally so this wasn't just a pilot, it had been tried before"* (SG01).

When asked a similar question about why *Incredible Years* was being used in their settings, the Group Leaders' responses referred to the existence of a variety of needs among clients within their professional settings:

> *"I suppose it was an assessment of need. I suppose it was looking at difficulties that children were experiencing and how to support parents"* (GL03).

The majority of the participating Group Leaders were satisfied with how the programme responded to the needs of the particular group with which they were working. A small number of issues relating to the complementary *Incredible Years* materials, in particular the DVD vignettes were identified - but these issues were described as being something they could work around.

5.2.1.4 Expectations of *Incredible Years Limerick*

When asked about their expectations of *Incredible Years* prior to engaging with the programme, the Group Leaders' responses referred to a variety of needs within their own professional setting. Teachers expressed clearly that they expected *Incredible Years* to help them develop effective behaviour management strategies for use in their schools. They expected that the Dina in the Classroom Programme would equally help the children to develop their social skills and to develop the ability to verbally express their emotions:

> ▪ *"I thought it would help to or would modify their behaviour without being forceful. To be the positive reinforcement and that it would finally break through. Because I'd tried it before and it wasn't. That's the kind of person I am I try to be positive about it. I suppose I thought it was a scheme that would be more concrete and that it would help"* (GL33).

- *"I just hoped that it was kind of more so for myself - for strategies on how to deal with all the different kind of behaviours and the emotional baggage that the children brought with them. That was it really"* (GL32).

In settings other than schools, particularly in agencies that are actively involved in family work, the Group Leaders viewed the Basic Parent Programme as a real learning opportunity for parents. Parents identified as having a real need for assistance in developing positive parenting skills, were selected for participation in *Incredible Years* programmes within these agencies.

The *Incredible Years* programme views early intervention as a key approach to developing positive views of education, as well as preventing early school leaving. These ideals were mirrored by the Strategic Steering Group representatives' comments relating to their expectations of the *Incredible Years* programme. They also expressed a hope that the individual programmes would have a positive impact on children's behaviour, which in turn would benefit the participating children's lives.

5.2.2 Management and Implementation of Incredible Years Limerick
The following sub-themes emerged, through the research, under the heading Management and Implementation:
  i   Communication,
  ii Support, materials and resources,
  iii Suitability and adaptability of the programme,
  iv Quality and effectiveness of *Incredible Years Limerick* policies,
  v   Interagency working and collaboration, and
  vi The future and sustainability of the *Incredible Years* programme.

5.2.2.1 Communication
Strategic Steering Group: There was consensus among the Strategic Steering Group members that communication with PAUL Partnership was working well; with sufficient information dissemination and availability of personnel to answer queries and respond to requests. Although they did not identify any specific issues relating to communication with stakeholders, partnership agencies or with PAUL Partnership as the co-ordinating agency, some members suggested that there had been an improvement in communication since a recent staff restructuring process in PAUL Partnership. In relation to Strategic Steering Group meeting arrangements, several representatives commented that all the necessary paperwork was supplied and was of a high quality. This, they felt, resulted in productive use

of Strategic Steering Group meeting time, which often resulted in decision-making as opposed to just discussions:

> *"People come with a very strong draft and the quality of the materials is very high - so the meeting is more about making decisions rather than discussion of the issues"* (SG10).

With regard to communication within and across agencies, the members of the Strategic Steering Group who had direct contact with other delivery agencies, reported that the channels of communication were working extremely well - with just occasional "*hiccups*" (SG04) being experienced.

Programme Staff: Programme Staff felt that developing communication networks between and across so many agencies resulted in some initial "teething" problems, but that it had since progressed well. The Programme Staff felt that positive relationships were established between themselves (*Incredible Years* Programme Staff) and Programme Operational Group members (Group Leaders), as a result of their attendance at Programme Operational Group meetings. The Programme Staff felt that this attendance at such meetings had been instrumental in Programme Operational Group members being able to put *"…a face on the name at the end of the email or phone"* (PS01). The Programme Staff also felt that this was important in facilitating positive communication. However, they also felt that there was some room for improvement in communication. One difficulty identified related to the complexities of communicating with class-based teachers. However, at the time of the evaluation, a text messaging system had recently been put in place - it was hoped that this would address such communication challenges.

Programme Operational Group: Communication between partners, stakeholders and PAUL Partnership was identified by Group Leaders and Strategic Steering Group representatives as being good. The Group Leaders were, on the whole, very satisfied with the level of communication, as well as with PAUL Partnership's role as facilitator of the *Incredible Years* programme in Limerick.

Although some of the Group Leaders pointed out that they rarely made contact with PAUL Partnership directly, they outlined that they were aware that channels of communication, both within their schools or through other settings, existed which meant that requests for funding, materials and confirmation of dates etc. were passed on and responded to quickly. A number of respondents highlighted differences relating to the clarity of channels of communication between 2009/2010 and 2008/2009. They felt that the channels of

communication were much clearer and more effective in the later period. This they attributed to the "…*teething problems…*" (GL12), which they associated with: (i) the extension of *Incredible Years* to additional locations and settings across Limerick City, and (ii) recent staff restructuring processes that took place within PAUL Partnership.

Comments from the survey questionnaire relating to communication with other agencies underlined that communication was working well. Many Group Leaders (32) selected the 'other' option when asked how often they interacted with other agencies and explained that on average it was once or twice a month. All of the Group Leaders who responded to the question relating to the means of interaction (34) specified that it varied, and all communication media were used (i.e. phone, text, email and regular post). The following quotes illustrate the positive comments made through the survey:

- *"Positive interagency interaction. Clear channels of communication with management team"* (GL13).
- *"Great feedback from other facilitators about problems we have with programme running. Good contact with teachers to discuss progress with children"* (GL01).
- *"Good communication between schools and agencies. Very helpful. Great organisation"* (GL39).

Some respondents suggested that there had been some initial difficulties with communication and, because of the schedule of meetings, that there was too much communication at times. "*Too many meetings"* was also mentioned as an area for improvement by 5 Group Leaders. The following quote gives a flavour of the comments from those who suggested that improvement was needed:

> *"More initial contact at the outset of programme delivery to ensure the programme starts in Sept/Oct, in order to complete the curriculum effectively. Planning of peer support sessions could be improved. Sessions occurred later in the school year and tended to take place too frequently e.g. One each month, which I felt was unnecessary"* (GL15).

5.2.2.2 Support, Materials and Resources

The majority of Group Leaders acknowledged that they had received support on a number of levels from PAUL Partnership. However, a number of the participants (the teachers, in particular), stated that they had rarely contacted PAUL directly, opting to work through a designated staff member (often the HSCL) instead. The support received by the Group Leaders included: support relating to the materials (manuals, parent books and DVDs); the awards, treats and food for the day-to-day activities of administering the programmes; the organisation of peer support meetings; and the supply of a video camera for self-evaluation

purposes. Difficulties relating to the first year of administering *Incredible Years,* as identified by the Group Leaders included: too many meetings; revised meeting dates; and short notice of meetings. However, the participants felt that such difficulties had largely diminished by the second year i.e. 2009/2010.

From the questionnaire responses it was clear that Group leaders could give extensive lists of the materials and resources that they and their respective agencies or schools had received from PAUL Partnership, as the facilitators for *Incredible Years Limerick.* These included:

- *"Group leader Manual, DVD box set - Small Group Dina, songs (CD) for Dinosaur school, puppets-all, homework manual, book (own copy), video/camcorder, DVDs, sticker, rulers, prizes for children"* (GL35).
- *"IY folder of notes including behavioural plans and notes, Carolyn Webster-Stratton book, DINA school, planning folders, resources to be used in the classroom, puppets"* (GL39).

The Group Leaders were mostly satisfied with the materials and resources and made just a few comments about how they could be improved. The suggested improvements related to: (i) the DVD vignettes, which they felt could be made more context-appropriate i.e. more Irish and less American, and (ii) the manual, which they felt was sequenced in a way that resulted in searching for the relevant sections during session preparation.

Although the majority of Group leaders agreed during the focus group discussions that *"…everything we asked for we got…"* (GL34), a small number reported delays in the supply of books, packs and/or puppets. Programme Staff were aware of such delays and explained that the delivery timeframe for materials, especially puppets, from *Incredible Years* in the USA, was an ongoing issue.

Most partner organisations felt that the support they received in delivering the *Incredible Years* programmes was valuable in a variety of ways, including; the provision of resources and training that they would have had difficulty accessing without the support of the *Incredible Years* programme.

5.2.2.3 Suitability and Adaptability of the Programme

Teachers, HSCLs, psychologists, health professionals and project workers among the Group Leaders were generally pleased with the suitability of the *Incredible Years* programmes that they were administering with their respective groups. Teachers, in particular, felt that the programme addressed specific issues that required attention, and that the Dina in the

Classroom Programme met a need for a programme that focused on effective social skills training for children. They did, however, underline that:

> "I don't think it's enough on its own and if the children were immersed in the Incredible Years [that would be the ideal situation]. I think, that much reinforcement [of new ideas/strategies], in real life you need it too" (GL29).

Group Leaders in a number of settings were in a position to point to the three-pronged approach being delivered in their settings. These participants expected increased benefits for children participating in the Small Group Dina Programme in particular, as these children were identified as being at heightened risk of disengagement from school due to family circumstances, conduct problems or low level social and emotional skills, and were expected to benefit hugely from their engagement with the *Incredible Years* Programme:

> "The same here, it's very…it's a really good programme. It would be a good programme to run out in every school in the world, because it takes a different approach. We'd see that there's a huge lack in parenting skills in our parents, because they wouldn't have had experience of being parented. And we've often discussed it ourselves - that we'd like them to have some sort of parenting programme. But to engage them has always been very difficult and this, I suppose, was going to be a whole-school approach. And you had the carrot of involving their children in something, and generally you can get something out of them if their children are going to get something out of it. So finally we had a way of getting them into a parenting programme" (GL31).

In terms of barriers in the delivery of the *Incredible Years* Programme, the American materials, particularly the vignettes with American actors (as contained on the DVDs), were viewed as a barrier in the delivery of *Incredible Years* in the Irish context. Group leaders frequently highlighted a mismatch between their own service users and the individuals and settings illustrated in the DVD vignettes. Most added that they had found ways of working around these issues - some used humour, some used techniques of pre- or post-viewing discussions of the vignette in order to clear up misunderstandings or language difficulties, etc. The Group Leaders also affirmed that they considered the behavioural situations illustrated in the vignettes to be appropriate and useful, and that the materials were suitable for their purpose. Nonetheless, it was evident, from the high number of interviews and focus group discussions within which this issue was mentioned (15 interviews and 8 focus groups), that changing the American settings and middle class language used in the vignettes would assist in making the materials more relevant to the Irish-based, and indeed Limerick settings. As mentioned above, improvements to the DVD vignettes were also highlighted, in the survey questionnaires, as a necessary improvement to the programmes.

5.2.2.4 *Quality and Effectiveness of Incredible Years Limerick Policies*

During the focus groups and interviews most respondents expressed awareness of the policies that had been issued to support the administration of *Incredible Years Limerick*. Most of the participating agencies and schools pointed out that, although their respective agencies already had their own policies in place, it was necessary to ensure the *Incredible Years* policies were compatible with them. Policies relating to child protection, consent and data protection were all highlighted as policies that were issued by the Strategic Steering Group through PAUL Partnership, and that were reviewed by the individual agencies.

In the questionnaire responses to the question about awareness of *Incredible Years Limerick* policies and procedures issued by PAUL Partnership, 19 Group leaders said they were aware of policies and procedures being in place and 18 said they were not aware of them. Twelve respondents indentified policies and procedures that were working well within their settings, but three of these highlighted that they used them in conjunction with policies that already existed in their respective organisations. Some suggested improvements that were proposed in relation to policies and procedures included; the regular reviewing of policies and procedures (2 respondents); and that an information booklet or session on policies and procedures would be helpful (2 respondents).

Several of the Group Leaders and Strategic Steering Group representatives commented that they received draft versions of the *Incredible Years* policies, but that they were unaware whether such policies had been finalised as of yet. The Strategic Steering Group representatives outlined that the *Incredible Years Limerick* policies had been developed by PAUL Partnership and that they were very satisfied with the quality of those documents.

5.2.2.5 Interagency Working and Collaboration

Partnership exists on a number of levels in the delivery of *Incredible Years Limerick*. Agencies and schools communicate to ensure that parents of the children participating in the children's programmes are engaged through the parent programme and agencies and schools also work together to co-facilitate *Incredible Years* programmes. Group Leaders from different agencies have opportunities for collaboration and partnership between otherwise unrelated agencies involved in the delivery of the *Incredible Years* programme. This multi-agency approach was highly valued by all Group Leaders who described it as a real learning opportunity that allowed them to draw on the professional knowledge of their co-facilitators.

At the level of the Strategic Steering Group, interagency collaboration was very evident – with a number of key agencies seated around the table, i.e. HSE West, DES, MIC, Limerick Regeneration Agencies, NEPS, Barnardos, SVP, PAUL Partnership, LSSC, Local community groups and schools, Family Resource Centres and Archways (the national organisation overseeing the implementation of the *Incredible Years* Programme in Ireland). Relationships at this level were perceived as positive and effective. Many of the Strategic Steering Group representatives underlined the value of high-level representation of the various agencies being "*around the table*" (SG10) at meetings. This, they believed, facilitated the efficient administration and implementation of *Incredible Years Limerick,* and allowed issues to be dealt with and decisions to be taken as the need arose. The Strategic Steering Group also highlighted that partnership was a key model that is evident in every aspect of the delivery of *Incredible Years*:

> "..there is a strong partnership for ourselves. We're delivering with partners, and that strong partnership is at all levels - at strategic level and at management level" (SG03).

Interagency Working / Collaboration – The Role of PAUL Partnership

A significant part of the success of the interagency collaboration was identified as resulting from PAUL Partnership's role as the central co-ordinating body:

> "PAUL Partnership has been a tremendous support and it's great that there has been a group leading it [Incredible Years Limerick] in the city" (GL28).

Group Leaders, Strategic Steering Group representatives and Programme Staff all highlighted that a co-ordinating agency is an important element in the delivery of *Incredible Years* as a large-scale project. PAUL Partnership's capacity to act as an objective agency*,* because they were not "*part of the system"* (SG12), was underlined by a number of the Strategic Steering Group representatives. However, both Project Staff and the Strategic Steering Group representatives were aware that this facilitative role could probably not continue indefinitely. They noted that there may be challenges in the future relating to the responsibility of the delivery of *Incredible Years Limerick*.

The Group Leaders acknowledged the support given to the programmes by PAUL Partnership, particularly in terms of resources and the establishment and accessing of peer support. The Group Leaders felt that peer support would have been difficult for schools and other agencies to organise on their own.

Several of the Programme Staff, the Strategic Steering Group and the Group Leaders made reference to the staff changes that had taken place in PAUL Partnership mid-way through delivery of the programme in 2009/2010[23]. Most of the comments related to how well this transition had been managed, and how minor the impact had been on implementing the programmes:

- *"They have very committed staff and when I heard that two were going I thought, 'oh my God'. But the new staff are right up to speed already"* (SG02).

- *"In terms of the management of the programme, including communications, I think all that is working extremely well. I suppose an example of why I think that, is that there have been a number of personnel changes and there has been a seamless transition there - so that's an indication of the solid base"* (SG15).

These quotes are indicative of the general feeling among the evaluation participants on the PAUL Partnership staff changes. Underlying the comments was an indication that the staff changes, and subsequent restructuring within PAUL Partnership, had led to a change in focus within the project. The early focus of the *Incredible Years* Programme had been on the individual programmes and getting agencies and schools to "buy-in" to them. The new focus was on the partnerships between the agencies and schools. There was a greater recognition of what the different partners had to offer to participants and how *Incredible Years* linked to their core work, especially to support mechanisms already in place for parents, children and families. This change of focus was seen as positive and participants viewed it as a factor that strengthened the various partners' participation in *Incredible Years Limerick*. There was a sense that they were partners in the project rather than being sold a programme.

5.2.2.6 The Future and Sustainability of the *Incredible Years* Programme

Two closely linked concerns were the future and the sustainability of *Incredible Years Limerick*. All respondents, when asked about their hopes for *Incredible Years Limerick*, replied that they hoped it would continue and also expressed a desire that they and their schools and agencies would continue to be involved with the *Incredible Years* programmes:

- *"Our feedback from PAUL Partnership is that it will definitely continue I think the issue will be funding"* (SG02).

- *"It already is part of the work"* (GL03).

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23 The staff changes that took place in PAUL Partnership involved one key *Incredible Years* staff member leaving for a new post and another staff member covering until an appropriate replacement was found.

- *"We talk about funding and we would support it and continue to support it"* (SG10).
- *"We would see it continuing in the school"* (GL24).
- *"We're hoping all the teachers and all the staff would be trained and it would become an integral part of our work"* (GL34).

Through the survey questionnaire the Group Leaders were able to expand their hopes for the future sustainability of the *Incredible Years* programmes in their settings. Thirty-two Group Leaders felt that *Incredible Years* was sustainable in their respective settings, and five did not. The elements identified by the participants, which they felt would make *Incredible Years* sustainable, were:

- Improvements in programme structure, content, ease of use and impact (22 respondents);
- Continuation of funding (6 respondents);
- Commitment of staff to the participants, the community, the children and the *Incredible Years* programmes (5 respondents);
- The observed benefits that made participants and Group Leaders advocates of the programmes (4 respondents);
- Interagency collaboration (3 respondents); and
- A continuing need for such programmes (2 respondents).

There were several key concerns about the continuation of *Incredible Years Limerick*, namely:

- Continuation of funding: This was a concern for the Strategic Steering Group representatives as well as for the Group Leaders and the Programme Staff. The Strategic Steering Group representatives stressed their agencies' commitment to the programme and in continuing to fund *Incredible Years Limerick* (if they were already doing so). Those agencies that contribute personnel, time and locations were also committed to, at least, continuing this level of support.
- Continued availability of staff: The issue of staff emerged as a fear for the continuation of *Incredible Years* in several schools. There were emerging possibilities of staff reductions, particularly in the area of learning support posts, which would seriously affect availability of co-facilitators for *Incredible Years* Dina in the Classroom programmes. Substitution of staff while attending *Incredible Years* training or peer support was also a concern for the future delivery of the programme. Some agency staff also envisaged that future staff reductions due to non-replacement of retired staff might affect their availability for *Incredible Years* delivery. Programme

70

staff were hopeful that their posts would be continued for at least the next year of *Incredible Years* delivery.

- Continuation of central agency role: In line with the identification of PAUL Partnership's co-ordinating role as a key element in the success of *Incredible Years* implementation and delivery, many of the respondents expressed a hope that this role would continue into the future. In terms of sustainability of *Incredible Years Limerick,* several respondents were aware that each agency would have to become more independent in their delivery of *Incredible Years*, especially if the programmes were to be extended further within Limerick City.

These concerns were mirrored in the survey questionnaire where the elements that were identified as working against sustainability were: (i) staff, especially in schools where pupil numbers were falling and there were associated staff reductions, (ii) time, and (iii) the discontinuation / uncertainty of funding.

5.2.3 Delivery of Incredible Years Limerick

From the analysis of the focus group and interview data the following themes emerged under the theme 'Delivery of *Incredible Years Limerick'*:

  i   Experiences and learning from the *Incredible Years* programme,
  ii Accreditation for the Group Leaders,
  iii Recruitment and engagement of programme participants,
  iv Peer support and workshops, and
  v   Time commitment in delivering *Incredible Years*.

5.2.3.1 Experiences and Learning from the *Incredible Years* Programme

The teachers delivering the Dina in the Classroom Programme outlined that they found the programme easy to use and that it sat relatively comfortably alongside the primary school curriculum. At the time of the Group Leaders' interviews, most of the participating schools were half way through the 18-week programme. Teachers reported that the children were using the *Incredible Years* strategies and phrases in the school yard with their peers (for example, taking deep breaths). However, the participating teachers did outline that not enough time had passed to expect to witness changes in behaviour. Teachers of older classes reported that relationships with some children had improved as a result of using the programme. These same teachers outlined that they had been surprised at the children's insights into their own behaviour.

71

Group Leaders involved in delivering the Basic Parent Programme explained that they frequently had to adapt the programme because the parents *"…couldn't engage with it…"* (GL31). There were a variety of reasons given e.g. parents not being ready for the programme; the accompanying vignettes being too far removed from the participants' realities; and the reading material being beyond the reading ability of the participating parents. The Group Leaders suggested that mixing levels of parental need on the Basic Parent Programme could result in some of the parents acting as role-models for the parents most in need of good parenting strategies.

The survey questionnaire allowed Group Leaders to expand on their learning from the programmes and they noted the programme's effectiveness, with 23 Group Leaders reporting observed positive changes in children's behaviour, as well as witnessing children using the *Incredible Years* strategies, and noticing parents growing in confidence and skills. Four respondents highlighted that the programme was enjoyable, and another four mentioned that it was good material to work with.

Those who were not satisfied with the *Incredible Years* programme in their settings suggested that improvements such as: a programme targeted at older school-age children (2 respondents), more parental involvement (3 respondents), and more effective procedures in their settings for recruiting parents to ensure the right mix of participants (2 respondents), would benefit the programme.

5.2.3.2 Recruitment and Engagement of Programme Participants

The criteria for the selection of participants were set out in one of the policies which was administered by Paul Partnership to all of the settings i.e. the Group Participant Recruitment and Selection Policy. This policy had been agreed by the Strategic Steering Group and, in their interviews, they highlighted that the three dimensions of the holistic approach was a key feature in the selection of the *Incredible Years* programmes as the most suitable behaviour intervention model. The Strategic Steering Group representatives were very much in favour of supporting the concurrent implementation of the three programmes, i.e. parent, child and teacher programmes, in settings where it was possible to do so. It was highlighted in the Group Participant Recruitment and Selection Policy that places on Basic Parent Programme should ideally be assigned to parents of children engaging in the Small Group Dina or Dina in the Classroom programmes. This was attempted in some settings and was quite successful in locations E[24] and G, but less so in locations A and C - where some of the

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24 The locations and settings have been coded to preserve anonymity.

72

targeted parents either did not engage with the programme, or were seen to be unready to engage with the particular programme. The readiness of parents to engage with *Incredible Years* programme was identified as a key issue - this is explored in greater detail below.

In some settings, notably Family Resource Centres and social services settings, referral and assessment of needs systems were already in place. The needs assessments were conducted through the use of semi-structured interviews and published parental stress instruments, and were part of the regular client/service interaction. In these settings there were also clients who had accessed other services and were seen to be ideal candidates for the *Incredible Years* parent programme. Where possible, in several of the settings the partnership approach underlined the need for inter-linked delivery of the programmes and so links with schools allowed them to easily identify parents whose children were taking part in the Small Group Dina or Dina in the Classroom programmes.

Schools selected classes to participate in the Dina in the Classroom Programme and also selected individual children (at risk of disengagement from education) to participate in the Small Group Dina Programme. From the survey questionnaires it also emerged that the selection of classes where Dina in the Classroom would be delivered, happened through a process of consultation. In all locations it was attempted to engage parents of children who were involved in child programmes, especially the Small Group Dina Programme, as the three-pronged approach of *Incredible Years* was seen as one of its strengths and viewed by the Strategic Steering Group as being the most effective approach.

Retention of children in the child programmes was not an issue for children in the schools or in the Family Resource Centres. The parent programmes were, however, highlighted as an area of concern in relation to retaining participants. The discussion ranged from the readiness of some parents to engage with the programmes (given the many other issues in their lives), to the monetary incentives that were adopted by some services as a method of delivering the programmes in the past. It had been decided by the Strategic Steering Group representatives not to offer this incentive for the 2009/2010 period. However, a drop in the number of parent participants was noted in some settings. As a result, a decision was recently taken by the Operational Group to reinstate the financial incentive in some locations for the remainder of 2010.

5.2.3.3 Peer Support and Workshops

The evaluation participants expressed mixed views about the peer support sessions and the workshops that were organised by PAUL Partnership and delivered by personnel from Archways, Dublin.

The general opinion among Group Leaders was that peer support sessions were very valuable. They highlighted the benefit of sharing their difficulties, questions and doubts - as well as the solutions to problems that arose in their settings. However, for a small number of participants the peer support sessions did not meet their expectations. For these participants some issues relative to peer support included:

- A lack of time to address the difficulties that they had experienced in their settings,
- Too few people attending the peer support session to make it worthwhile,
- Too much focus on replicating elements that were previously covered during the *Incredible Years* training, and
- A poor venue i.e. too cold, insufficient food and a lack of hot drinks.

Group Leaders expressed mixed views about peer support in the survey questionnaires. The description given by 15 respondents was that of a meeting to share and exchange ideas, opinions and experiences. Support was mentioned by 6 Group Leaders, reflection by 2 and problem-solving were also terms used to describe the peer support sessions. Four of the Group Leaders highlighted that mentoring was part of peer support, and two mentioned supervision. When speaking of the facilitators' roles in the peer support meetings it was noted that they were independent, and were involved in making recommendations, giving guidance and suggesting solutions to problems in addition to their role as mentor:

- *"Peer support is supervision which is delivered by Archways staff from Dublin. It's an opportunity to get feedback in relation to how you are delivering programme & support you may need"* (GL03).

- *"Meeting teachers from other schools that are using the I.Y. programme and discussing what worked / didn't work for us. Getting and giving opinions on the programme - always good to get somebody else's opinion"* (GL08).

In their responses to the questionnaire twenty-four of the Group Leaders said that they found peer support beneficial and the remaining 13 did not find it beneficial. The following quotes show the range of views on peer support:

- *"This was organised through NEPS / Archways last Sept. Invigorates & promotes programme fidelity"* (GL10).

- *"Great support. Constructive advice / criticism. Helps to focus & structure our programmes. Helps me to get out of 'teacher' mode & into 'facilitator' role. Learn from experience of others and how to get the best out of the programme so that my parents then get the best out of the sessions"* (GL24).

- *"I feel the pace is very slow. It is a huge commitment as I have a lot of commitments in my HSCL role"* (GL23).

In the interviews and focus groups a number of the Group Leaders expressed the concern that the peer support sessions were structured as a form of 'retraining', where the facilitator reviewed and used questions to go over the explanations and structures that were contained within the service manual. This was considered to be unnecessary by the Group Leaders, who would have preferred greater opportunities to discuss strategies that they were using locally and how to improve their own techniques.

The topic of peer support was discussed at great length during the Strategic Steering Group focus group. The agency managers had been made aware of the value of this supervision to their staff members and felt that it was crucial. However, it was pointed out that there had been issues with dates being moved at short notice in the first year of implementation of *Incredible Years Limerick*. For the period 2009/2010, dates were set in advance, which helped to resolve this issue. Staff reports to agency managers had indicated that although some groups were very happy with supervision (parenting programme Group Leaders) there were some issues with the low numbers attending and the quality of supervision at the peer support session for the Group Leaders in the child programmes. The suggestion was put forward that accreditation of Limerick-based training of trainers should be examined.

5.2.3.4 Accreditation for the Group Leaders

Accreditation emerged under a number of the discussion themes. The Strategic Steering Group representatives highlighted that regular training was available only by travelling to Dublin or Wales. At present, because of the city-wide programme it has been arranged for trainers from Archways to travel to Limerick to deliver training to Group Leaders. Several of the Strategic Steering Group representatives considered this an unsatisfactory situation that could be addressed by ensuring that there were local accredited trainers available. Additionally accreditation was identified by the Strategic Steering Group as a means of:

- Up-skilling staff,
- Gaining more local control over *Incredible Years*, and
- Establishing a solid base from which to expand *Incredible Years* within the city.

With regard to accreditation, the Strategic Steering Group identified challenges such as funding and difficulties associated with trained staff moving on. They suggested that achieving accreditation was reliant on participating agencies and staff being supported. It

was suggested that PAUL Partnership was a key element in this support and, furthermore, that the process of accreditation was an important step in making the project self-sustaining:

> *"...they've* [PAUL Partnership] *been very pro-active around supporting agencies around accreditation, and seeing that that's what's needed in terms of: (a) the project becoming self-sufficient, and (b) ensuring that you have the quality, because that's the difficulty with so many organisations - you have the potential for quality to slip if you don't have the systems built in to maintain that"* (SG14).

Group leaders, when asked about their hopes for *Incredible Years*, mentioned becoming accredited trainers as part of their hopes for the future of *Incredible Years.* They also identified the accreditation process as one of the challenges in delivering *Incredible Years.* Some Group Leaders found it difficult to fulfil the requirement to video sessions as they were delivering them. Several Group Leaders outlined that they were working towards accreditation, but others were reluctant to engage in the process of accreditation as they were unsure about how it would add to their workload. They did, however, acknowledge that it would be beneficial to have local accredited trainers in order to build sustainability into *Incredible Years Limerick.*

5.2.3.5 Time Commitments in Delivering *Incredible Years*

The most frequently mentioned challenge at the interviews and focus groups was time. Several aspects of the time invested in the programmes were mentioned, they included:

- Time for preparation,
- Staff time (time for training and consequent staff substitution, time for delivering the programme, time for preparation and time for follow up),
- Time given to city-wide meetings, and
- Balancing time for *Incredible Years* with other aspects of the Group Leaders' jobs.

These time considerations were mentioned most often in the participating schools. However, staff training and substitution were also mentioned by a number of agencies. The agencies also felt that the challenge of balancing time, and the significant investment of time required for *Incredible Years* as part of their working day was of concern. They added that because of this level of time commitment they wanted to see results from their investment.

Additional workloads were viewed as time well spent because they helped the Group Leaders to become more familiar with the programme. A number of the Group Leaders of the Dina in the Classroom Programme indicated that the programme sessions were spread

across four different manuals, which they felt was inefficient and, in the early stages of becoming familiar with the programmes, lengthened preparation time.

5.2.4 Programme-Specific Concerns and Issues

In addition to the general reflections above, specific themes that related to individual programmes emerged from the focus groups and interviews. The Basic Parent Programme in particular raised a number of issues that were, according to the Group Leaders, very much linked to the context in which they were running the *Incredible Years* programmes and the target population, i.e. the parents and children. The programme-specific themes are discussed under the relevant programme headings below.

5.2.4.1 Basic Parent Programme: Specific Themes

The question on recruitment and retention of participants raised a significant number of issues among the Group Leaders of the Basic Parent Programme at the focus group discussions. In some instances concerns related to the readiness of parents to engage with the programme:

"They're kids themselves" (GL34).

The suitability of the programme was also considered to be an issue by some Group Leaders. They considered that the vignettes portrayed an environment that was far removed from the realities of the participants. Other Group Leaders, however, underlined that the children's behaviour and parental responses to the behaviour, as portrayed in the vignettes, were familiar to the participants. They felt that this outweighed any lack of affinity with the environment shown:

"The vignettes are very middle class, even in the language used" (GL06).

While viewing the Incredible Years programme as good and likely to have significant benefits, Group Leaders also pointed out that they did not view it as an answer to all needs in the community or the school. Particularly in relation to the Basic Parent Programme - it was recognised that this programme was not the answer to all parents' needs. It was noted by a number of Group Leaders that some parents were not able to engage with the programme because of the high level of difficulties in their lives that prevented them from prioritising their children's needs.

Group Leaders suggested that a follow-up to the Basic Parent Programme was an essential future step, for both social support and further training. Parents frequently called for a

continuation of meetings with their *Incredible Years* group, as a support mechanism. Some of the school settings were working towards facilitating this as part of the HSCL Co-ordinator's interaction with parents. It was highlighted that the initiative for this had very much originated with the parents who had completed *Incredible Years* training and that this in itself was an indication of how the programme had helped them in becoming more aware of social supports. It was also stated that parents have expressed an interest in doing more courses and in attending training to become Group Leaders themselves.

However, for some parents the programme was viewed as being "*too difficult*" (GL36). Difficulties, it was felt, were due to: the degree of literacy required to fully engage with the programme materials; the American cultural assumptions in the vignettes; and also the time commitment involved, even for the 14-week programme.

5.2.4.2 Small Group Dina Programme: Specific Themes

At the time of the evaluation the Small Group Dina Programme was being delivered in five locations. Three were within schools and two were within Family Resource Centres. The school locations found it to be a useful programme for targeting children in a small group environment but underlined that the programme was of most value when the child's class and class teacher were also familiar with the language and strategies of the Small Group Dina Programme:

- *"To improve the quality of life for teachers and children in the infant corridor and to have a good behaviour management programme that everyone was using"* (GL32).
- *"I'd agree with that so that we're all working off the same hymn sheet. A common language throughout the school"* (GL34).

The ideal situation, they suggested, would be if the parents were also involved:

"We made a decision that we would only take children in the Small Group Dina whose parents would engage in the parenting programme and I know not everyone is doing that but it's a decision we felt that the programme would be more beneficial and more successful" (GL31).

Involvement in *Incredible Years* through more than one programme was the case for a small number of children engaged with *Incredible Years Limerick*. Although a review of such cases was not within the scope of the current evaluation, such analysis would be a worthwhile exercise.

5.2.4.3 Dina in the Classroom Programme: Specific Themes

The Dina in the Classroom Programme was being used extensively in two of the participating schools and in one/two classrooms in the remaining five schools. In the main, the programme was being used with junior classes but a range of classes were involved from Junior Infants to Second Class.

Teachers described the Dina in the Classroom Programme as:

- *"Great..."* (GL14).
- *"A really good programme"* (GL06).

The teachers explained that the children had a real need for language to express their emotions. Problem-solving skills were another identified outcome of the Dina in the Classroom Programme.

In some cases (largely where the programmes were being delivered in several classrooms or with a whole-school approach) the teachers highlighted the usefulness of the programme in assisting the school to have a unified approach to behaviour management.

Some teachers, however, described the programme as problematic when used with the older classes:

> *"Second class don't believe the puppets for a second"* (GL28).

Time, as with other programmes, was mentioned as a barrier by the Group Leaders involved in Dina in the Classroom Programme. In several ways this issue of time was experienced differently by this group. Although the Dina in the Classroom Group Leaders identified preparation time as a difficulty, most of them qualified this by pointing out that with familiarity they were able to prepare for sessions much more quickly. In relation to this point, several Group Leaders outlined that having different sections/items for different sessions in one of four different manuals made for inefficient and complicated preparations. They felt that they would have found it less time-consuming and more accessible if the related items had been grouped by session.

In terms of "…*fitting the programme into their day*" (GL20), this was viewed as relatively straightforward in the school setting - as the *Incredible Years* curriculum meshed easily with the SPHE curriculum. The main time issue experienced in this setting was timetabling for a co-facilitator. The co-facilitator in most schools was a Learning Support Teacher or a

Resource Teacher, and thus their hours had to be carefully timetabled to accommodate *Incredible Years* delivery. In most cases where this was mentioned as part of the discussion about barriers or challenges it was qualified that this had rarely been problematic, but that there had been occasions when the co-facilitator had needed to juggle responsibilities when something arose on a particular day. In the main, *Incredible Years* was prioritised, as this Group Leader explains:

> *"You can get called away but then when you have a whole class waiting it's got to be a priority"* (GL22).

5.2.5 Strengths in the Delivery of Incredible Years

Among the wide variety of responses to this question it was possible to identify four main themes, they were:

   i.   PAUL Partnership's facilitative role,
  ii.   The *Incredible Years* programme,
 iii.   Professional development, and
  iv.   Personnel: motivation, commitment and enthusiasm.

5.2.5.1 PAUL Partnership's Facilitative Role

This was highlighted by Strategic Steering Group representatives, Group Leaders and Programme Staff as being a key feature in the success of the implementation of *Incredible Years Limerick*. A feature of the role that was selected for particular mention as a strength was the central co-ordinating role both in distributing resources and in organising meetings, training and peer support. Also mentioned was the development of policies and procedures and supporting documentation that was instrumental in establishing a structure for the *Incredible Years Limerick* programmes. It was also highlighted that it was important that the agencies and schools felt that they were not engaged in delivering *Incredible Years* in isolation and the knowledge that PAUL Partnership support was available when needed, was important in this regard.

5.2.5.2 The *Incredible Years* Programmes

All of the programmes were viewed as having strong and relevant content that met the programme objectives. The content of the programmes was described as user-friendly, particularly in an environment where suitable technology (DVD / Television) was available for use with the vignettes. This was especially highlighted in schools where the availability of interactive whiteboards was seen as crucial to the ease of delivering the programme in a busy curriculum. Overall, despite some reservations about the DVD vignettes, the Group Leaders had strong praise for the programmes and the likelihood that the stated objectives

of the programmes could be achieved, if they were delivered appropriately. In their survey questionnaire responses the Group Leaders highlighted the puppets as a key strength of the Child Programmes, especially when delivering to younger children.

5.2.5.3 Professional Development

Delivering *Incredible Years* was seen as a significant opportunity for professional development by a number of Group Leaders, particularly those who had recently trained and were working with a co-facilitator from whom they were learning techniques for working with the groups, with the puppets and with the *Incredible Years* materials. They also highlighted that they were building knowledge on many different levels.

5.2.5.4 Personnel Motivation, Commitment and Enthusiasm

Several Group Leaders highlighted that the passion, commitment and motivation of the people supporting and delivering *Incredible Years* were significant strengths of the programme - without which they felt the programmes could not be delivered and would not be successful. Strategic Steering Group representatives also described the enthusiasm and commitment of people working with *Incredible Years* programmes as being a key strength of the implementation and delivery in Limerick.

5.2.6 Challenges in the Delivery of Incredible Years

As outlined previously, the most frequently mentioned challenge was time. Aspects such as time for preparation, staff time (training, staff substitution, delivery, preparation and follow up), time given to city-wide meetings, and balancing time for *Incredible Years* with other aspects of the Group Leaders' core jobs were all mentioned as challenges.

These aspects of time considerations, as outlined above, were mentioned most often in schools. However, staff training and substitution were also mentioned by several agencies. The agencies also felt that the aspect of balancing time and the significant investment of time in *Incredible Years* as part of their working day was of concern and that they expected to see results from their investment.

An additional challenge mentioned by Group Leaders and Strategic Steering Group members was that there was a lack of clarity about how the programmes could be adapted to the needs of particular groups while still maintaining fidelity to the programmes. The recruitment and retention of parents for the Basic Parent Programme was also highlighted as challenging by Group Leaders in schools.

One expressed concern related to the selection of facilitators and ensuring they had the necessary skills in group facilitation before undertaking the *Incredible Years* training - mainly because this training focussed on the programme and did not offer support in group facilitation:

> *"That's another thing I think, about the parenting programme, people were allowed to take on the parenting programme who hadn't done a lot of other parenting skills. Maybe they were teachers or maybe they were development workers and there was just this two days…just two days training. I think it's three days now. And they were supposed to be ready then to run the programme and really there should have been some pre-work done for the leaders"* (SG09).

This challenge was mentioned by other Strategic Steering Group representatives who suggested that one of the challenges in partnership delivery was ensuring that the Group Leaders had the right set of skills to be effective in delivering the *Incredible Years* programmes. This was a challenge that they expected would be encountered in any future expansion of *Incredible Years* and for that reason they counselled a focus on consolidating *Incredible Years* in the current locations to build a skill base to be drawn upon in the future.

Barriers were also identified by 25 Group Leaders in their responses to the survey questionnaire. Time was mentioned most frequently (by 9 respondents) in relation to all programmes, as can be seen from the quotes below:

- *"TCM programme can be challenging to access because it requires 5 full day workshops a month apart or 10 half days etc."* (GL10).
- *"14 weeks is a very long time scale. If parents were given an incentive to attend I believe we would have many more doing the course"* (GL23).
- *"All preparation work and plans are done outside of school hours"* (GL39).

The Group Leaders involved with the Basic Parent Programme (five respondents) highlighted group composition as a barrier i.e. ensuring a mix of levels of need within the group. Three teachers involved with child programmes (the Small Group Dina Programme and the Dina in the Classroom Programme) identified the need to adapt programme materials for some of their groups of children. The DVD vignettes were also mentioned by three respondents as a barrier because of the language used within the videos and/or the middle class lifestyles they presented.

Staff demands were mentioned by four Group Leaders as barriers to the successful delivery of *Incredible Years Limerick.* Such staff demands related to: (i) staff cuts (which were expected as a result of economic cutbacks) and two facilitators being required, at any one

time, to deliver the programme, and (ii) the necessity of substitution for teachers acting as programme co- facilitators.

5.2.7 Key Learning

All of the interview and focus group participants were asked to identify key learning from their involvement with *Incredible Years*. This section ends with a summary of the aspects of key learning identified by the evaluation participants. They were:

- Developing familiarity with the programmes leads to greater confidence in delivery - through establishing what content works and what doesn't.
- The whole-school approach works most effectively - especially when supported by other agencies to ensure multiple perspectives on the family dynamic and the child's social and school environment.
- Significant time is needed, over and above the actual programme delivery - especially around preparation, staff involvement in follow-up, initial and ongoing contact with participants, staff training and consulting with co-facilitators.
- Reflective practice is key and is strongly supported in the *Incredible Years* approach.
- It is necessary to be selective to ensure that participating pupils are those who display real needs – this helps to justify the resources being put into the programmes.
- There can be learning from the children, as teachers observe the different strengths and weaknesses that emerge as a result of the programmes.
- Presenting the rules from a positive perspective helps to make facilitators more positive which results in good role-modeling for the children.
- Parents require follow-up support upon completion of the programmes and agencies that can organise or facilitate this follow-up in their core work have an advantage over schools in being able to meet this need.
- Parent selection is crucial as not all parents can engage with the programme.
- Being aware that a mixed range of parental needs within a parent programme contributes to the success of the programme.
- The programme is not a panacea and is not suitable for all needs.

5.3 Chapter Summary

The findings from the interviews, focus group discussions and survey questionnaires were largely positive and supportive of *Incredible Years Limerick*. The findings have identified the concerns and issues that the respondents have in relation to *Incredible Years* and also areas

where they expressed satisfaction and enthusiasm for the programmes. Although a number of issues and concerns were raised by the evaluation participants, each of these concerns was being addressed by *Incredible Years Limerick* at the time of the evaluation. The findings also identified strengths and challenges in the management, implementation and delivery of the programme in Limerick City*.* Key learning was also identified. Hopes and fears for the future of *Incredible Years Limerick* were explored and can be used to guide future direction for the programme. Overall, the participants were satisfied that the adopted model of delivery, i.e. a central co-ordinating agency (PAUL Partnership) and a Strategic Steering Group (to oversee and manage the Programme), was an effective and efficient model.

The survey questionnaire findings reflect the findings from the interviews and focus groups and offer an insight in relation to the various aspects of the *Incredible Years* evaluation, specifically the themes of communication, materials and resources, suitability and adaptability of the programmes, as well as the sustainability of the programmes. This in turn, has assisted in the triangulation of the data gathered earlier in the evaluation (through focus groups and interviews), whilst also allowing the evaluation team to assess the reliability of the data gathered through the interviews and focus groups. An additional impact section at the end of the survey questionnaire allowed the Group Leaders to identify how they felt the programmes that they were facilitating had met the stated programme objectives. This section has been included in the following 'programme impact' chapter.

Chapter 6: *Incredible Years Limerick* Evaluation - Programme Impact Findings

6.1 Introduction

The data on programme impact were gathered by Group Leaders in each of the programme locations in Limerick across the seven geographical communities. The instruments used were the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) which is an internationally recognised child-behaviour rating questionnaire (Goodman, 1999 and 2001), the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Questionnaire, and the End of Programme Questionnaire. This chapter describes each of the instruments and presents the main findings of this element of the evaluation.

6.2 Programme Impact Findings

The programme impact findings, presented below, are entirely quantitative in nature. The data were gathered using the following instruments and with the following numbers of participants:

i.   Teachers' Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) completed by teachers[25] delivering the Dina in the Classroom Programme and the Small Group Dina Programme pre- and post-programme delivery. 230 pre-programme teachers' SDQs were received (a 100% response rate) and 213 post-programme SDQs were returned (a 93% response rate),

ii.   Parents' Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) completed by parents participating in the Basic Parent Programme pre- and post-programme delivery. 61 out of 64 parents' pre-programme SDQs were received (a 95% response rate) and 48 post programme SDQs were received (a 75% response rate),

iii.   Pre- and post-programme delivery Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Questionnaires. 11 out of 11 pre- and post-programme questionnaires were received (a 100% response rate),

iv.   Teacher Classroom Management End of Programme Questionnaire. 11 out of 11 questionnaires were received (a 100% response rate).

There were a total of 231 children who were affected by *Incredible Years* programmes supported by *Incredible Years Limerick*. The majority of these children (192) were affected by one programme only. There were 170 children who participated in Dina in the Classroom

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25 For ease of reading, the word 'teacher' has been adopted to include all teachers and setting staff who delivered the Incredible Years programme in the participating schools and settings.

only, across seven school locations. There were 10 children who participated in Small Group Dina only. Twelve children whose parents participated in a Basic Parent programme were also affected by *Incredible Years*, but those children were not participating in another *Incredible Years* programme during the evaluation period.

Some children were affected by two programmes when their parents were participating in the Basic Parent programme. These included 15 children who were participating in Small Group Dina and 11 children who were participating in Dina in the Classroom. These children were dispersed across 3 schools/locations. There were also a number of children (13) who were affected by all three Incredible Years programmes. These children were also dispersed across three locations.

It was not within the scope of the evaluation to establish separate impact analysis for the children affected by more than one programme. The small numbers and the variety of locations across which they were dispersed would make a statistical analysis of the results very difficult to interpret with confidence.

6.2.1 Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) Findings

The *Incredible Years* Evaluation Sub-Group, through PAUL Partnership, invited Group Leaders delivering the Dina in the Classroom and Small Group Dina programmes to rate children's behaviour pre-programme delivery and post-programme delivery. Parents participating in the Basic Parent Programme were invited to rate the behaviour of one child in their care. The instruments used to gather this data were the Teachers' SDQ and the Parents' SDQ (see description, below). This section of the report presents the results from the teachers' pre- and post-programme delivery SDQs and parents' pre- and post-delivery SDQs. Table 15 below illustrates the number and distribution of SDQs received for the two phases of data collection. SDQs were completed in relation to 291 children pre-programme delivery and 261 were completed post-programme delivery. Teachers were requested to complete a SDQ for each child participating in the Dina in the Classroom Programme. Group leaders were requested to complete an SDQ for each child participating in the Small Group Dina Programme. Parents participating in the Basic Parent Programme were also requested to complete a SDQ for one child in their family who was participating in an *Incredible Years* programme.

Table 15: No. of Pre- and Post-Programme Delivery SDQs Returned			
	Teacher Completed SDQs	**Parent Completed SDQs**	**TOTAL**
Pre-Programme Delivery	230	61	291[26]
Post-Programme Delivery	213	48	261

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire is a 25-item child behaviour questionnaire which contains five subscales and is used to measure the occurrence of particular behaviours (associated with conduct problems, hyperactivity, emotional symptoms, peer problems and pro-social behavior) in children. In the context of *Incredible Years Limerick*, the respondent (teacher or parent) was asked to rate how true a particular behaviour was, using a 3-point Likert scale that ranged from 0 (not true) to 1 (somewhat true) to 2 (certainly true). Although the parent and teacher versions of the SDQ are identical in appearance, the scoring applied to each version differs.

A Total Difficulties score on the SDQ is calculated from 4 of the 5 subscales (pro-social behaviour is not included in the total difficulties score as this is a positive attribute rather than a difficulty) and scores are classified as falling within the range of 'abnormal', 'borderline' or 'normal' behaviour. These ranges relate to clinical measures of behaviour. It should be noted that the labels adopted i.e. 'abnormal', 'borderline' and 'normal' are generic psychological labels and should not be construed negatively.

In addition to the 25 items, an optional impact section is also included with the SDQ to measure the impact of the child's difficulties on family and other relationships. This impact section contains a yes/no question relating to the child's emotional, concentration, behaviour or relationship problems. If the respondent answers 'yes' he/she is then asked to detail the level of chronicity, distress, social impairment, and burden to other children in the classroom or family setting, as a result of these difficulties. Total impact scores are also classified as 'abnormal', 'borderline' and 'normal'.

i Teacher SDQ

Two-hundred and thirty pre-delivery SDQs (a response rate of 100%) and two-hundred and thirteen post-delivery SDQs (a response rate of 93%) were returned to the

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26 The completed SDQs relate to a maximum number of 291 children as two SDQs were completed for each child. The maximum number for whom there were teacher completed SDQs was 230 and the maximum for whom there were parent completed SDQs was 61.

evaluation team. The completed SDQs referred to the children with whom: (i) the teachers were implementing the Dina in the Classroom Programme, and (ii) the group leaders were implementing the Small Group Dina Programme. Of the total number of children being referred to by teachers and group leaders (230 children), 102 (44.3%) were female, 116 (50.4%) were male and the gender of 12 children (5.3%) was unspecified.

ii **Parent SDQ**

Sixty-one parents completed the pre-delivery SDQ (a response rate of 95%) and forty-eight completed the post-delivery SDQ (a response rate of 75%). Of the total number of parent SDQs received (61), 50 (82%) were completed by mothers and 3 (4.9%) were completed by fathers (the remaining 8 were unspecified). The gender of the child was specified as female by 25 parents and male by 32 parents, there were two missing answers and 2 invalid responses to this question.

The findings presented in this section are broken down into: simple frequency analysis findings, and paired samples t-test findings.

6.2.1.1 Simple Frequency Analysis

As outlined previously, the ratings obtained from the children's SDQ scores were classified as falling within the clinical range of 'abnormal', 'borderline' or 'normal' behaviour. The following section examines the frequency of children that fall within each clinical category.

Teacher-Completed SDQ – Children's Clinical Classification:

Table 16 below displays the results of the SDQs as rated by the children's teachers. As the numbers of SDQs received pre- and post- programme differ, the valid percentages have been used, and the discussion will refer to percentages rather than numbers.

Table 16: Teacher Completed SDQ - Child Clinical Classification						
Scale	Abnormal		Borderline		Normal	
	Pre-Programme	Post-Programme	Pre-Programme	Post-Programme	Pre-Programme	Post-Programme
Emotional Symptoms Scale	10%	7%	6%	5%	84%	88%
Conduct Problems Scale	18%	14%	6%	5%	76%	81%
Hyperactivity Scale	21%	15%	8%	3%	71%	82%
Peer Problems Scale	9%	8%	7%	4%	84%	88%
Total Difficulties	19%	15%	10%	7%	71%	79%
Pro-Social Scale	12%	13%	8%	5%	80%	82%

The **total difficulties score** in the teachers' SDQ ratings show that there was an increase in the percentage of children rated within the 'normal' behaviour range, from 71% pre-programme delivery to 79% post-programme delivery. This is matched by decreases in the percentage of children within the 'abnormal' range (down from 19% pre-programme delivery to 15% post-programme delivery) and 'borderline' range (down from 10% pre-programme delivery to 7% post-programme delivery).

In relation to the four subscales that make up the total difficulties score, the subscale that displays the highest level of change is the **hyperactivity scale**. This subscale shows an increase of almost 11% of children falling within the 'normal' clinical range - up from 71% pre-programme delivery to 82% post-programme delivery. The corresponding decreases in the other two categories are: 6% in the 'abnormal' range and 5% in the 'borderline' range. The **conduct problems subscale** shows the next highest change with an increase from 76% pre-programme delivery in the 'normal' range, to 81% post-programme delivery. The **peer problems scale** and the **emotional symptoms scale** each show a slight increase in the percentage of children falling within the 'normal' range post-programme delivery (approximately 4% increase). The pro-social scale also displays a slight increase in the percentage of children falling within the normal range (up from 80% pre-programme delivery to 82% post-programme delivery).

Parent-Completed SDQ – Children's Clinical Classifications:
Table 17 below displays the results of the parent-completed SDQ ratings. As above, these findings are reported as rounded percentages, using valid percentage figures to account for the difference in response rates pre- and post-programme delivery.

Table 17: Parent Completed SDQ – Child Clinical Classification						
Scale	**Abnormal**		**Borderline**		**Normal**	
	Pre-Programme	**Post-Programme**	**Pre-Programme**	**Post-Programme**	**Pre-Programme**	**Post-Programme**
Emotional Symptoms Scale	28%	19%	13%	19%	57%	62%
Conduct Problems Scale	38%	38%	13%	17%	47%	45%
Hyperactivity Scale	26%	19%	10%	15%	62%	66%
Peer Problems Scale	36%	21%	23%	17%	39%	62%
Total Difficulties	41%	28%	13%	15%	44%	57%
Pro-Social Scale	8%	2%	7%	13%	86%	85%

The **total difficulties scale** in the parent-completed SDQ displays a decrease in the percentage of children falling within the 'abnormal' range (falling from 41% pre-programme to 28% post-programme). There is a small increase in the percentage of children falling within the 'borderline' range (increasing from 13% pre-programme delivery to 15% post-programme delivery) and a notable increase in the percentage of children falling within the 'normal' range (increasing from 44% pre-programme delivery to 57% post-programme delivery).

The **peer problems subscale** shows the greatest change with an increase from 39% pre-programme delivery in the 'normal' range to 62% post-programme delivery. The **conduct problems subscale** shows a slight decrease from 47% pre-programme delivery to 45% post-programme delivery in the 'normal' range, most of the associated increase is in the percentage of children rated as 'borderline' post programme.

The **hyperactivity** and **emotional problems subscales** displayed slight increases in the percentage of children falling within the 'normal' range (increasing by approximately 4% in both cases from pre- to post-programme delivery).

The **pro-social subscale** indicates a decrease in the percentage of children falling within the 'abnormal' range (falling from 8% pre-programme delivery to 2% post-programme delivery) and increases in the percentage of children falling within the 'borderline' range (from 7% pre-programme delivery to 13% post-programme delivery) and within the 'normal' range (from 86% pre-programme delivery to 85% post-programme delivery).

In addition to the 25 items, an impact section was also included. This section asked whether the respondent thought the child had emotional, concentration, behaviour or relationship problems. If the respondent answered 'yes' to any of the above, he/she was then asked to detail the level of chronicity, distress, social impairment, and burden to other children in the classroom/setting, as a result of that difficulty. Total impact scores were also classified as 'abnormal', 'borderline' and 'normal'.

Teachers completed this section of the SDQ in relation to two-hundred and seventeen children pre-programme delivery and two-hundred and eight post-programme delivery. Fifty-eight parents completed this section of the pre-programme delivery SDQ and forty-six completed it in the post-programme delivery SDQ. Because the two may refer to different children, the impact scores for teachers and parents have been presented in two separate tables below for pre- and post-programme delivery ratings on the impact scale.

Table 18: Teacher Rating of Children's Level of Difficulty						
Scales	**Abnormal**		**Borderline**		**Normal**	
	Pre-Programme	**Post-Programme**	**Pre-Programme**	**Post-Programme**	**Pre-Programme**	**Post-Programme**
Children's Difficulty Score as Rated by Teachers	45 (21%)	34 (16%)	21 (10%)	11 (5%)	151 (69%)	163 (79%)

The children's difficulty scores in the SDQ impact section, as rated by teachers, display an increase in the percentage of children falling within the 'normal' range post-programme delivery (up from 69% pre-programme delivery to 79% post-programme delivery). The percentage of children falling within the 'abnormal' range pre-programme delivery decreased from 21% pre-programme delivery to 16% post-programme delivery. There was also a decrease in the percentage of children falling within the borderline range, down from 10% pre-programme delivery to 5% post programme delivery.

Table 19: Parent Rating of Children's Level of Difficulty						
Scales	**Abnormal**		**Borderline**		**Normal**	
	Pre-Programme	**Post-Programme**	**Pre-Programme**	**Post-Programme**	**Pre-Programme**	**Post-Programme**
Children's Difficulty Score as Rated by Parents	22 (38%)	10 (21%)	5 (9%)	4 (9%)	31 (53%)	32 (70%)

The parents' impact scores about their children also display an increase in the percentage of children falling within the 'normal' range – increasing from 53% pre-programme delivery to 70% post-programme delivery. A considerable decrease was evident in the percentage of children falling within the 'abnormal' range between pre- and post-programme delivery, reducing from 38% pre-programme delivery to 21% post-programme delivery.

6.2.1.2 Paired Samples T-Test[27]

The completed SDQs were analysed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). A paired samples t-test was run to assess statistically significant change between pre-programme delivery and post-programme delivery. The results of the t-test are outlined below, with teacher-completed and parent-completed SDQs reported separately.

Teacher-Completed SDQ – Paired Samples T-Test:

Table 20 illustrates the results of the paired samples t-test that was run for the teacher-completed SDQs. The nominal alpha criterion level was set at .05.

Table 20: Teacher Completed SDQ - Paired Samples T-Test					
Scales and Subscales of SDQ	**Pre-Programme Delivery Mean Score (SD)**	**Post-Programme Delivery Mean Score (SD)**	**T Value**	**Degrees of Freedom**	**P Value**
Total Difficulties Scale	0.46 (.792)	0.36 (.723)	2.312	212	.022*
Emotional Symptoms Subscale	0.27 (.643)	0.18 (.531)	1.954	212	.052
Conduct Problems Subscale	0.42 (.783)	0.33 (.710)	1.865	212	.064
Hyperactivity Subscale	0.45 (.785)	0.33 (.724)	2.609	212	.010*
Peer Problems Subscale	0.23 (.579)	0.19 (.554)	.881	212	.379
Pro-Social Subscale	0.33 (.697)	0.31 (.692)	.395	212	.693

*p<.05

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27 A paired samples t-test is a statistical procedure used to compare 2 scores (or sets of scores) to identify if the differences between them are due to chance, or are a result of an intervention. In this case, 213 sets of before and after scores have been compared for each of the SDQ scales. Results where the p-value is at or below 0.05 are deemed to be statistically significant.

Analysis of the above statistics indicates a statistically significant decease in the total difficulties combined score[28] and also in the hyperactivity subscale pre- and post-programme delivery. The results of the paired samples t-test are outlined below:

a. **Total Difficulties Scale** – indicates a statistically significant decrease in the number of children obtaining high scores on the total difficulties scale between pre-programme delivery (M=0.46, SD=.792) and post-programme delivery (M=0.36, SD=.723), t(2.312), df=212, p<.05.

b. **Hyperactivity Subscale** – indicates a statistically significant decrease in children obtaining high scores on the hyperactivity subscale between pre-programme delivery (M=0.45, SD=.785) and post-programme delivery (M=0.36, SD=.724), t(2.609), df=212, p<.05.

The other scales did not show statistically significant results.

Parent-Completed SDQ - Paired Sample T-Test:

Table 21 below illustrates the results of a paired samples t-test for parent-completed SDQs. As above, the nominal alpha criterion level was set at .05.

Table 21: Parent Completed SDQ - Paired Samples T-Test					
Scales and Subscales of SDQ	**Pre-Programme Delivery Mean Score (SD)**	**Post-Programme Delivery Mean Score (SD)**	**T Value**	**Degrees of Freedom**	**P Value**
Total Difficulties Scale	0.91 (.952)	0.70 (.883)	1.700	47	.096
Emotional Symptoms Subscale	0.74 (.920)	0.57 (.801)	1.185	47	.242
Conduct Problems Subscale	0.83 (.940)	0.94 (919)	-.868	47	.390
Hyperactivity Subscale	0.55 (.855)	0.53 (.804)	.178	47	.860
Peer Problems Subscale	0.96 (.884)	0.60 (.825)	2.849	47	.007*
Pro-Social Subscale	0.28 (.649)	.17 (.433)	1.093	47	.280

*p<.05

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28 As outlined earlier, the total difficulties score is calculated from the four difficulties subscales (emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity and peer problems). It does not include the pro-social subscale as this is a positive variable as opposed to a difficulty.

The following are the main findings of the parent-completed SDQ paired samples t-test:

a. **Total Difficulties Combined Scale** – did not display a statistically significant change between pre-programme delivery (M=0.91, SD=.952) and post-programme delivery (M=0.70, SD=.883), t(1.700), df=47, p>.05.

b. **Peer Problems Subscale** - this was the only scale that displayed a statistically significant change in the parent-completed SDQ paired samples t-test between pre-programme delivery (M=0.96, SD=.884) and post-programme delivery (M=0.60, SD=.825), t(2.849), df=47, p>.05.

None of the other results were significant at the .05 level.

6.2.2 Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Questionnaire Findings

As outlined above, the second programme impact instrument that was disseminated was the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Questionnaire. At the time of evaluation, the Teacher Classroom Management Programme was being delivered with a group of teachers in one school. The facilitator invited participants to complete a pre-programme Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Questionnaire prior to commencing the programme, and again upon completion of the programme. This 24-item questionnaire contained three subscales (student engagement, instructional strategies and classroom management), and was designed to measure participating teachers' sense of efficacy (i.e. the belief that they themselves can have a positive effect on their pupil's behaviour and learning) relative to all three subscales. A total of eleven teachers completed the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Questionnaire pre- and post-programme delivery.

A paired samples t-test was conducted to evaluate the impact of the intervention on participants' sense of efficacy scores. Table 22 below outlines the following scores that were obtained:

i. Mean score for each of the three subscales pre- and post-programme delivery;

ii. T Value to represent the difference between the mean/average scores of pre- and post-programme delivery, while also taking in to account any variation in scores; and

iii. Probability value to indicate statistical significance (the nominal alpha criterion level was set at .05).

Table 22: Teachers' Sense of Efficacy (Pre- and Post-Delivery)					
Subscales of Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale	Pre-Programme Delivery Mean Score (SD)	Post-Programme Delivery Mean Score (SD)	T Value	Degrees of Freedom	P Value
Student Engagement	6.114 (.9210)	6.977 (1.0619)	-4.966	10	.001*
Instructional Strategies	7.109 (.7255)	7.568 (.6968)	-1.529	10	.157
Classroom Management	6.718 (.7485)	7.627 (.7386)	-3.595	10	.005*

*p<.05

Analysis of the above statistics indicates statistically significant increases in two of the subscales:

a. **Student Engagement Subscale** – indicates a statistically significant increase between pre-programme delivery (M=6.114, SD=.9210) and post-programme delivery (M=6.977, SD=1.0619), t(-4.966), df=10, p<.05.

b. **Classroom Management Subscale** – indicates a statistically significant increase between pre-programme delivery (M=6.718, SD=.7485) and post-programme delivery (M=7.627, SD=.7386), t(-3.595), df=10, p<.05.

c. **Instructional Strategies Subscale** - did not display a significant change between pre-programme delivery (M=7.109, SD=.7255) and post-programme delivery (M=7.586, SD=.6968), t(-1.529), df=10, p>.05.

6.2.3 Teacher Classroom Management End of Programme Questionnaire Findings

The Teacher Classroom Management (TCM) End of Programme Questionnaire was completed by 11 teachers who participated in the TCM Programme. The instrument assessed respondents' perspectives relative to: the overall programme; the usefulness of the teaching techniques used; the usefulness of the programme content (i.e. that informs teaching techniques); and programme delivery. Table 23 below displays the findings relative to this instrument. Although the original scales had seven points (ranging from 'considerably worse' to 'greatly improved', 'very dissatisfied' to 'greatly satisfied', 'very pessimistic' to 'very optimistic', 'very inappropriate' to 'greatly inappropriate', and 'strongly not recommend' to 'strongly recommend') – only the points on the scales for which responses were received are included in the table below.

Table 23: Teacher Satisfaction with Overall Teacher Classroom Management Programme			
Student's behaviour that I developed a behaviour plan for is (are):	**Slightly Improved**	**Improved**	**Greatly Improved**	**Invalid**
	-	10	1	-
Other students' problems which I/we have tried to change using the methods presented in this workshop are:	**Slightly Improved**	**Improved**	**Greatly Improved**	**Invalid**
	6	4	1	-
My feelings about my current students' progress are that I am:	**Slightly Satisfied**	**Satisfied**	**Greatly Satisfied**	**Invalid**
	3	6	1	1
My expectation for good results from this workshop is:	**Slightly Optimistic**	**Optimistic**	**Very Optimistic**	**Invalid**
	-	10	1	-
I feel the approach used to change students' behaviour problems in this workshop is:	**Slightly Inappropriate**	**Appropriate**	**Greatly Appropriate**	**Invalid**
	1	7	3	-
Would you recommend this workshop to another teacher?	**Slightly Recommend**	**Recommend**	**Strongly Recommend**	**Invalid**
	-	7	4	-
How confident are you that you will be able to manage current behaviour problems in your classroom?	**Slightly Confident**	**Confident**	**Very Confident**	**Invalid**
	1	7	3	-
How confident are you that you will be able to manage future behaviour problems in your classroom?	**Slightly Confident**	**Confident**	**Very Confident**	**Invalid**
	1	7	3	-

The measured frequencies show that the majority of the teachers were positive in their estimation of the usefulness of the overall programme in achieving success in a variety of outcomes. They showed a very high level of satisfaction on 3 scales:

- Student behaviour where there was a plan in place,
- Expectations of good results from workshop, and
- Appropriateness of the approach to changing students' behaviour problems.

In relation to two other scales the teachers also showed a high level of confidence in relation to managing current and future behaviour problems in their classrooms with the majority (10) suggesting that they were confident or very confident about managing behaviour in their classrooms. The scales that showed least satisfaction were those relating to changing other students' behaviour and students' progress. With regards to recommending the Teacher Classroom Management Programme workshop to other teachers, all of the participants

outlined that they would 'recommend' or 'strongly recommend' (7 and 4 respectively) the workshop to a colleague.

Table 24 (below) displays the teachers' ratings of the usefulness of the teaching strategies used in the workshops. Although there were seven points on the original scale, as previously, the table only presents the three points that were selected by the teachers. The original scale ranges from 'extremely useless' to 'extremely useful'.

Table 24: Usefulness of Teaching Strategies Used in Teacher Classroom Management Programme				
N=11	Somewhat Useful	Useful	Extremely Useful	Invalid
Information Presented by Group Leader	-	5	6	-
Demonstration of Skills through Video Vignettes	4	6	1	-
Teachers' Group Discussion and Sharing of Ideas	-	1	10	-
Practicing Skills in Small Groups	2	7	2	-
Small Group Breakouts to Work on Behaviour Plans	1	4	5	1
Support from Other Teachers	-	1	10	-
Suggested Classroom Activity Assignments	-	7	4	-
Programme Manual (*How to Promote Children's Social and Emotional Competence*[29])	1	4	6	-

As can be seen from the table, the teachers found the teaching strategies mostly 'useful or 'extremely useful'. The teaching technique rated as 'least useful' was the use of the vignettes to demonstrate skills. This reflects the issues identified in the previous chapter relative to the vignettes used in the parent and child programme. The techniques rated as most useful were the teacher group discussions and the support from other teachers - both of which were rated by 10 participants as being 'extremely useful'.

Table 25 (below) displays the programme content scales. As previously, not all seven points on the scale have been included in the table, which only retains the three points that were selected by the teachers. The original scale ranged from: 'extremely useless' to 'extremely useful'.

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29 This manual is also used as the material for the Basic Parent Programme.

Table 25: Teacher Satisfaction with Teacher Classroom Management Programme Content			
	Somewhat Useful	Useful	Extremely Useful
Child-Directed Play	-	8	3
Descriptive Commenting / Interactive Reading	1	5	5
Praise / Encouragement	1	2	8
Incentives	-	5	6
Ignoring	-	4	7
Good Commands / Clear Limit Setting	-	4	7
Time Out / Calm Down Place	-	5	6
Loss of Privileges, Logical Consequences	-	5	6
Redirects / Distraction	-	6	5

The teachers generally found the programme content 'useful' or 'extremely useful'. The most useful content identified was the use of 'praise and encouragement', and 'ignoring [mild misbehaviour]' and 'giving good commands / clear limit setting'.

The third and final section of the Teacher Classroom Management End of Programme Questionnaire was open-ended and allowed teachers to identify:

- The part of the programme that was most helpful to them;
- What they liked most about the programme;
- What they liked least about the programme;
- The part of the programme that was least helpful to them; and,
- How the programme could be improved to help them more.

The majority of teachers only answered one or two of the open-ended questions. The findings have been broken down by the question posed, and are presented below.

1. *The Part of the Programme that was Most Helpful to Participating Teachers*:
   The majority of those teachers who responded to this question i.e. 5 teachers, specified that time for discussion during the Teacher Classroom Management Programme was most helpful to them. Two of the teachers felt that focusing on individual child behaviours and discussing strategies for addressing such behaviours was hugely helpful.

2. *What Participating Teachers' Liked Most about the Teacher Classroom Management Programme*:
Six teachers responded to this open-ended section, and all six outlined that they enjoyed group discussion during the programme, and the opportunity to share their experiences in delivering the *Incredible Years* programme.

3. *What Participating Teachers' Liked Least about the Programme*:
Five teachers responded to this question. All five specified that they least enjoyed watching and demonstrating skills to use the DVD vignettes.

4. *What Part of the Programme was Least Helpful to the Participating Teachers*:
Three of the teachers opted to complete this open-ended question, and all three specified that the section relating to the DVD vignettes was least helpful to them in delivering and engaging with *Incredible Years Limerick*.

5. *How the Teacher Classroom Management Programme could be Improved*:
Six teachers responded to this question. Two of the teachers felt that adapting the programme would help them – one felt that adapting the programme to a disadvantaged setting would help, and the second felt that adapting it to the Irish context would help. The remaining four respondents felt that the Teacher Classroom Management Programme was a good programme, and that there was nothing to change.

6.3 Survey Questionnaire Impact Section

The final section of the questionnaire (Section 5) dealt with the Group Leaders' perceptions of the impact of the programmes and whether or not they thought the objectives of the programme had been achieved (see Appendix A for a complete list of the objectives).

There were two questions relating to the general impact of the programmes:
1 Do you feel that the *Incredible Years* programmes that you work with effectively prevent behavioural problems in 2-10 year old children?
2 Do you feel that the *Incredible Years* programmes that you work with effectively treat behavioural problems in 2-10 year old children?

In relation to **prevention**, 24 Group Leaders agreed that the programmes prevented behavioural problems in 2-10 year old children and 9 did not agree. The remaining 4 did not

complete this section of the questionnaire. They were asked to explain their answer and their comments reflected something of a 'wait and see' approach as they highlighted that they hoped this intervention would give the children something to build on that would prevent behaviour problems in the future:

> *"It provides pupils with the skills / vocabulary, an understanding of feelings etc. i.e. tools which may prevent / treat behavioural problems in their lives. I feel that by providing children with these 'tools' we are setting the pupils up for success in managing and self-regulation of their behaviours i.e. we help in preventing misbehaviour"* (GL15).

They also highlighted the programme's focus on positive parenting and on developing children's and parents' language for expressing emotions and they highlighted early years' interventions as being key to their success:

> - *"Do prevent behavioural problems. By starting the programme on special- time / developing relationships / praise, you are getting parents to work on the positive; they can see for themselves that the children's behaviour has changed"* (GL03).
> - *"It provides the children with the right language and methods of dealing with anger and emotions and ways of calming down"* (GL42).

The Group leaders who did not agree that *Incredible Years* programmes prevented behavioural problems argued that although the programmes could help in managing behaviour, they do not go all the way to preventing behavioural difficulties:

> - *"Many parents learning new skills which they find difficult to apply due to child's resistance and often unsupportive or combative partners / families. The older the child the more difficult* [it is]. *Many parents have difficulties setting limits and following through and sustaining momentum"* (GL24).
> - *"It doesn't prevent it fully, but I feel it teaches them and us. To try and catch the difficult behaviour before it arises"* (GL45).

In relation to **treatment,** 29 Group Leaders agreed that the programmes treat behaviour problems in children and 3 disagreed. Five Group Leaders did not respond to this section. The Group Leaders comments focussed on the language and strategies for learning to deal with emotions. Even those who did not agree that the programmes treated behaviour problems outlined that they were useful in the short-term and that only time would tell if they were an effective treatment:

> - *"Using Wally as their friend, has helped children in my class see that sometimes, we all do have these feelings, and it's ok, but it's important to see how we manage these feelings"* (GL45).

- *"It helps children who have behavioural problems to develop their self-esteem and learn about successful ways of anger-management and positive reinforcement"* (GL42).
- *"They certainly help short term, however, it is too early to say if they treat behavioural problems long term.   More time is needed to evaluate the programme"* (GL49).

The final part of the impact section of the survey questionnaire asked the respondents to rate the extent to which the programme they had facilitated met its stated objectives. A 5-point Likert scale was used to measure their responses. Tables 30 and 31, below, profile the findings of this aspect of the evaluation.

6.3.1 Basic Parent Programme Impact

Fourteen Group Leaders identified themselves as having facilitated a Basic Parent Programme. Table 26, below, presents their responses.

Table 26: Group Leaders - Impact of Parent Programme					
In my opinion, the *BASIC Parent Programme* has helped…	Agree Strongly	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree	Disagree Strongly
Increase parents' use of praise and positive feedback to children	8	6	-	-	-
Reduce parents' use of criticism and unnecessary commands	3	11	-	-	-
Parents replace spanking and other negative physical behaviours with non-violent discipline techniques	3	9	2	-	-
Parents promote positive strategies such as ignoring the child's behaviour, allowing for logical consequences, providing redirection, and developing problem-solving and empathy skills	4	8	1	-	-
Improve parents' problem-solving skills and anger-management	3	8	3	-	-
Increase family support networks	4	4	6	-	-
Increase family-school involvement	6	5	3	-	-
Increase children's social skills	4	8	2	-	-
Increase children's problem-solving skills	5	7	2	-	-
Increase children's effective anger-management strategies	5	5	3	-	-
Decrease children's negative attributions	4	6	2	-	-
Increase children's empathy skills	3	7	3	-	-
Decrease children's aggressive behaviour	4	5	3	1	-
Decrease children's conduct problems (such as: non-compliance, peer bullying and rejection, stealing and lying)	6	4	2	1	-
Increase children's school readiness	4	3	5	1	-
Increase children's academic competence	4	3	5	1	-

From the table above it can be seen that the Group Leaders facilitating the Basic Parent Programme strongly endorsed the programmes as meeting its objectives. Several features of the programme were particularly endorsed, with all of the 14 respondents selecting 'strongly agree' or 'agree' as their response. The most strongly endorsed objectives were:

- Increasing parents' use of praise and positive feedback to children;
- Reductions in parents' use of criticism and unnecessary commands;
- Parents' use of positive strategies; and
- Increased family-school involvement.

The other objectives were also quite strongly endorsed, with most having a greater number of respondents selecting 'agree' or 'strongly agree' and just one or two selecting 'don't know'. The main exception was 'increase family support networks' where 6 out of 14 respondents chose the 'don't know' option.

6.3.2 Child Programme Impact

Nineteen Group Leaders responded to this section of the survey questionnaire. Respondents of this section had facilitated either the Small Group Dina Programme or the Dina in the Classroom Programme - the objectives for these programmes are identical. Table 27 below presents the main findings.

Table 27: Group Leaders - Impact of Child Programmes					
In my opinion, the *Dina in the Classroom* and *Small Group Dina* Programmes have helped…	Agree Strongly	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree	Disagree Strongly
Children detect, understand and accept and verbalise feelings in themselves and others	10	9	-	-	-
Children learn inter-personal cognitive problem-solving (such as the ability to identify and define social problems, generate solutions, consider alternatives and make a plan	9	9	-	1	-
Children learn anger-management and self-control skills	11	7	1	-	-
Children learn the behaviours necessary to be friendly (such as helping, sharing, and teamwork behaviours	12	7	-	-	-
Children learn effective communication skills for talking to other children (such as telling, listening, asking, supporting, speaking-up, praising, and apologising)	11	7	1	-	-
Children learn effective school behaviours (such as listening, waiting, concentrating, and cooperating	10	9	-	-	-
Children learn group skills (including active participation, cooperation, leadership, and group decision-making	11	6	1	-	-
Children develop self-esteem and self-confidence	9	9	1	-	-
Promote social competence and peer acceptance in children (through development of problem-solving and communication skills)	7	12	-	-	-
Enhance peer relationships among the participating children	10	7	2	-	-
Reduce conduct problems and peer rejection among the participating children	7	10	2	-	-
Foster increased self-esteem among the participating children	8	10	1	-	-
Prevent long-term negative consequences of social skill deficits and conduct problems among the participating children	6	5	8	-	-

As can be seen from the table above, the Group Leaders strongly endorsed the programmes as having been helpful in achieving their objectives. The most strongly endorsed objectives were:

- Children learn the behaviours necessary to be friendly;
- Children learn anger-management and self-control skills;
- Children learn effective communication skills; and
- Children detect, understand, accept and verbalise feelings in themselves and in others.

The least endorsed objective, as identified through the highest number of respondents who selected 'don't know', was that 'the programmes helped to prevent long-term negative consequences of social skill deficits and conduct problems among children'. This reflects the comments that the Group Leaders had made in the earlier part of the questionnaire, when they adopted a 'wait and see' approach.

6.4. Chapter Summary

The quantitative data contained in this chapter explored the:

- Teacher ratings of children's outcomes from the Dina in the Classroom and Small Group Dina programmes;
- Parent ratings of children's outcomes from the Basic Parent Programme;
- Teachers' sense of efficacy pre- and post-programme delivery;
- Teacher feedback relative to the Teacher Classroom Management Programme; and
- Survey questionnaire impact section.

Teacher ratings of children's outcomes indicated that the frequency of children in the normal range of behaviour had increased on all 5 sub-scales within the SDQ, and the percentage of children in the 'abnormal' and 'borderline' categories had decreased. The teachers' ratings also showed that children's Total Difficulties Scores and Hyperactivity Scores, as measured by the SDQ, had decreased and that this change was statistically significant.

Parent ratings of children's outcomes, as measured by the SDQ, also showed that, on most scales, the frequency of children in the 'normal' behaviour range had increased while there were decreases in the number of children in the 'abnormal' and 'borderline' categories. One scale showed statistically significant change, namely the peer problems scale.

Teachers' sense of efficacy indicated statistically significant increases in student engagement and classroom management. Instructional strategies did not display significant change between pre- and post-programme delivery.

Teacher ratings of the usefulness of the content of the Teacher Classroom Management Programme showed that they rated most of the content as 'useful' or 'extremely useful'. They also displayed a high level of satisfaction with the strategies taught and the methodologies used. The one area of least satisfaction was the DVD vignettes. The open ended section of the questionnaire endorsed the fact that the teachers found the programme useful and helpful.

Survey questionnaire - programme impact section: For the most part there was agreement, in many cases strong agreement, that the *Incredible Years* programmes were achieving their objectives. Some of the Group Leaders suggested in their comments, that it may be too early to tell if these objectives have been achieved in a way that will yield long-

term benefits for the participating parents and children. Nonetheless, it is clear from these survey results that Group Leaders have a belief in and a commitment to *Incredible Years* that may contribute to the overall success of the programme

Chapter 7: Conclusions & Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

Incredible Years Limerick was established in 2007 and was initially implemented in three locations in Limerick City, with PAUL Partnership acting as the co-ordinating agency on behalf of a multi-agency Strategic Steering Group[30]. Its overarching aim is to both prevent and treat behavioural problems in children (ranging in age from 2 to 10 years of age) who are either at risk of, or already exhibiting social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The wider *Incredible Years* initiative consists of three types of programmes that are aimed at developing the skills and competencies of parents and teachers, to enable them to address children's social, emotional and behavioural needs. Each individual programme aims to achieve long-term positive impacts on children's behaviour.

After three years of implementation, PAUL Partnership and the *Incredible Years* Strategic Steering Group agreed that the Limerick-based programme would benefit from being evaluated. This evaluation was intended to inform the future operation and development of *Incredible Years Limerick*. The evaluation work commenced in March 2010 and sought to evaluate *Incredible Years* programmes being delivered in Limerick City between March and June 2010. Aspects of the programmes examined were as follows:

  i. The management, implementation and delivery of the programmes, and
  ii. The impact of *Incredible Years Limerick.*

The methodologies adopted for the evaluation are described in detail in Chapter 1. They included: (i) semi-structured interviews, (ii) focus groups, (iii) an open-ended survey, as well as (iv) pre- and post-programme delivery instruments that have been widely used in evaluations of *Incredible Years* programmes both nationally and internationally.

This chapter presents key conclusions from the *Incredible Years Limerick* evaluation. Furthermore, it provides recommendations in relation to the future operation and delivery of the Limerick-based programme. The remainder of this chapter is divided into four sections. The first section reviews the management, implementation and delivery of *Incredible Years Limerick*, while the second section draws together the main conclusions of the evaluation relative to the impact, costs and benefits of the programme. The third section of this chapter

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[30] See chapter one for a comprehensive list of the agencies represented on the *Incredible Years* Strategic Steering Group.

re-examines the objectives of the evaluation, and the final section presents recommendations regarding the future operation and delivery of *Incredible Years Limerick.*

7.2 Management, Implementation and Delivery of *Incredible Years Limerick*

The evaluation has identified a number of positive elements in the management, implementation and delivery of *Incredible Years Limerick*. These are summarised under the following headings:

- Commitment of *Incredible Years Limerick* Stakeholders
- Interagency Collaboration and Communication
- Programme Content, Resources and Materials
- Parental Engagement
- Training and Accreditation
- Peer Support
- Time Commitments
- *Incredible Years Limerick* Policies and Procedures

The *Incredible Years* programme is anchored in the psychological principle that behaviour is learned through social interaction, suggesting that social relations are the solution to changing adult and child behaviour (Archways, 2007a). It is intended that the promotion and modelling of positive social interactions with adults and children will encourage pro-social behaviours and discourage disruptive behaviours among participating children. The overarching *Incredible Years* initiative is comprised of three individual programmes designed to promote pro-social behaviour in children and to offer strategic behaviour management training for parents and teachers/setting staff. Previous studies have affirmed the positive outcomes associated with combining more than one programme in the delivery of *Incredible Years* (Webster-Stratton et al., 2004). It was not within the scope of the current evaluation to test the outcomes associated with combining more than one programme in Limerick City. However, the current evaluation has demonstrated that, overall, *Incredible Years Limerick* has successfully implemented a programme founded on the principles and approaches that are deemed to be core components of the Incredible Years Programme.

7.2.1 Commitment of Incredible Years Limerick Stakeholders

> **KEY FINDING**
>
> **All stakeholders involved in the Limerick-based programme (i.e., members of the Programme Operational Group (Group Leaders), the Programme Staff and members of the Strategic Steering Group) were found to be highly committed to and positively disposed towards the *Incredible Years* programme.**

A major conclusion of the *Incredible Years* evaluation is that all stakeholders involved in the Limerick-based programme (i.e., members of the Programme Operational Group (Group Leaders), the Programme Staff and members of the Strategic Steering Group) are highly dedicated to and positively disposed towards the programme. All of the interviewed staff and group leaders were enthusiastic and positive about the *Incredible Years* programme they were involved with. They are genuinely concerned about generating positive outcomes for the children and families with whom they work and they committed time and energy above and beyond that expected of them, in order to encourage real change for the families engaging with the programme in Limerick.

The commitment of the Group Leaders, Programme Staff and Strategic Steering Group members was evidenced by the attendance of the majority of stakeholders at *Incredible Years* training and meetings and by their participation in all aspects of interaction necessary for the implementation and delivery of *Incredible Years* in Limerick. The majority of the interviewees also demonstrated awareness of and appreciation for the evidence-base and effectiveness of the programme in other national and international contexts.

7.2.2 Interagency Collaboration and Communication

> **KEY FINDING**
>
> **The quality and extent of interagency collaboration between the relevant *Incredible Years Limerick* stakeholders was extremely positive.**

There was a clear collaborative partnership approach between all agencies engaged with *Incredible Years Limerick.* The existence of good communication and relationships between and across agencies involved in the programme delivery enabled the successful

implementation of the programme. In particular, relationships between PAUL Partnership, partner agencies and schools were reported as being extremely positive and working well. This, we contend, will help to build sustainability and ultimately lead to positive outcomes for children.

There were practical benefits from this partnership approach also. The collaborative practice systems that have been established between the settings and the schools ensured that parents of children engaging with the children's programmes were recruited to engage with the parent programme training element. The importance of combining parental engagement and child engagement with *Incredible Years* programmes is acknowledged within the research literature which recognises the added benefits that are derived from delivering the parent programme to parents of children engaging in the children's programmes (Webster-Stratton et al., 2004).

KEY FINDING

Good communication existed between and across agencies involved in the delivery of *Incredible Years Limerick,* including agencies represented on the Strategic Steering Group, the co-ordinating agency (PAUL Partnership) and the delivery settings.

As outlined above, positive communication and relationships existed between PAUL Partnership, partner agencies and schools. This positive communication ensured that the *Incredible Years* programmes were organised and rolled out efficiently across Limerick City. Given the scale of the *Incredible Years Limerick* programme, it could be expected that some anticipated communication difficulties might arise during the pilot phase. The current evaluation revealed that problems arose relative to communicating changes to dates and times of meetings/training events to teachers at short notice. However, this difficulty has since been acknowledged by PAUL Partnership and a solution has been put into operation.

7.2.3 Programme Content, Resources and Materials

KEY FINDING

Group Leaders acknowledged the programme content as being enjoyable, fun, engaging and positive for children and parents.

Several elements of the programmes were particularly useful. Schools identified a certain amount of coherence between the *Incredible Years* children's programmes and the Irish primary school curriculum (in particular the strands and strand units of the Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum). In this way it was possible to incorporate aspects of the *Incredible Years* children's programme as part of the SPHE curriculum.

The content of the *Incredible Years* programmes and the accompanying resources and materials were viewed positively by the Group Leaders. In particular, the *Incredible Years* puppets were identified as being highly effective when used with younger children. However, they have been identified as being inappropriate for use with children in the senior classes of an Irish primary school who found them humorous and did not identify with them in a way that was anticipated by the programme administrators. Additionally, although the programme manual was described as being highly relevant and appropriate; it posed some difficulties with regard to layout and sequencing as outlined in section 5.2.2.2.

KEY FINDING

Although most Group Leaders felt that the DVD vignettes portrayed highly appropriate behavioural situations and interventions; it was agreed that the context, social class and culture displayed in the DVDs were unfamiliar to and unsuitable for use with the families engaging with the programme in Limerick.

The vast majority of Group Leaders felt that the vignettes contained within the DVDs portrayed behavioural situations and interventions that were appropriate to the needs of the participating children and families. However, it was the context, social class and culture displayed in the DVDs that caused great difficulty since they were unfamiliar to the children and families, who could not, therefore, identify with the vignettes. This caused Group leaders to spend large amounts of time explaining the unfamiliar context or language in advance of showing the vignette, which resulted in a loss of focus on the core lesson plan for the group.

KEY FINDING

Delays (originating in the United States) in the delivery of resources and materials to participating schools and settings contributed to deferred commencements of *Incredible Years* programmes.

One challenge identified through the evaluation was the delay in the delivery of resources and materials to the participating schools and settings. Although it was acknowledged that this was a result of delays on the part of the US distributors, it is also recognised that such hold-ups can contribute to the delay in the commencement of programmes, but may also result in a sense of apathy, and possibly disengagement, among prospective participants. Although these delays were outside the control of PAUL Partnership (as the problem originated in the sourcing company for the *Incredible Years* materials) it is important that such delays are minimised.

7.2.4 Parental Engagement

> **KEY FINDING**
>
> **It emerged from the evaluation that the parent programme required some adjustment in order to meet the needs of Limerick City parents.**

One of the key contributors to the success of the *Incredible Years* programme (as determined by the research (Webster-Stratton et al., 2004)) is the engagement of parents and the consequent uniform utilisation of the behaviour management strategies by teachers and parents across school and home environments. Despite the fact that a number of the settings had established processes to actively encourage the engagement of parents whose children were due to participate/already engaging with *Incredible Years*, the numbers of parents participating in the Basic Parent Programme at the time of the evaluation were quite low. In addition, the retention levels of those parents that did engage have proven problematic. It also emerged from the evaluation that the parent programme was inappropriate to the needs of some parents being targeted for engagement in the programme across Limerick City. There are several possible explanations for this including lack of emotional readiness of parents to engage with the programme at this level; personal family circumstances or difficulties; and/or low levels of literacy among some parents. In addition, the inappropriateness of the DVD vignettes (referred to earlier) to parental cultural norms may have had an impact on parental retention levels.

> **KEY FINDING**
>
> **Parents who had been involved in the parent programme expressed a desire to advance to another parent programme or to avail of accredited training. This suggests that the programme does not only have an impact at one level of the human life-cycle (i.e., childhood), but rather spans across it (i.e., life-long learning).**

However, it is notable that a number of parents who had been/were involved in the *Incredible Years Limerick* parent programme expressed a desire to advance to another parent programme or to avail of accredited *Incredible Years* training. This could be facilitated by having access to local accredited trainers, which would in turn simplify the logistics of delivering training for *Incredible Years Limerick.* It would also support parents in their quest to avail of accredited training, while contributing to the possibility of introducing peer mentoring at a later date.

7.2.5 Training and Accreditation

> **KEY FINDING**
>
> **The availability of accredited trainers would ease the process of professional development within Limerick City while also promoting the long-term sustainability of the *Incredible Years Limerick* programme.**

The majority of Limerick-based *Incredible Years* stakeholders (Programme Staff, Strategic Steering Committee and Group Leaders) have attended or are attending training in support of their roles within the programme. The high levels of engagement of stakeholders with the *Incredible Years* training and accreditation should ultimately contribute to the quality of the delivery and sustainability of the *Incredible Years Limerick* programme in the longer-term. However, a number have not completed their training and are currently attending training in Dublin and/or Wales. This highlights a lack of availability of local accredited trainers, as identified by the Strategic Steering Group and Programme Staff evaluation participants. In addition, the effective delivery and sustainability of *Incredible Years Limerick* is compromised by the loss of trained staff, who have ceased employment with their participating agencies.

There appeared to be some reluctance on the part of Group Leaders in relation to seeking accreditation. The Group Leaders expressed anxieties about engaging with such a process, for fear that it would add to their already full workloads. This would suggest the need for managers to review workloads and consider incentives to promote engagement with the accreditation process. Furthermore, if *Incredible Years Limerick* is to be sustainable - all those involved will need opportunities for structured ongoing reflection and review.

7.2.6 Peer Support

KEY FINDING

The peer support network and sessions were viewed as being highly valuable among Group Leaders and Programme Staff.

Overall the peer support and network sessions were highly valued and participants welcomed the opportunity to meet with their colleagues to network and share practice on a regular basis. However, the following concerns were noted by a majority of Group Leaders:

- The length of the sessions were considered to be too short
- Group Leaders noted that too few people were in regular attendance at the meetings
- The quality of some network venues was unsatisfactory e.g., they were too cold
- The inadequacy of the agenda items (specifically, too much time was allocated to the replication of training and insufficient time was given to networking and information sharing)
- The scheduling and cancellation of meetings (which was subsequently addressed in year 2 of this initiative).

7.2.7 Time Commitments

KEY FINDING

A significant time commitment was required to prepare *Incredible Years* sessions, attend city-wide meetings, and balance the demands of *Incredible Years* programmes with Group Leaders' primary work responsibilities – this level of time commitment was something that Group Leaders did not anticipate before engaging with the programmes.

Challenges relative to the time required for the effective delivery of *Incredible Years Limerick* largely related to the amount of time required for preparation of programme sessions, attendance at city-wide meetings, and balancing the demands of *Incredible Years* programmes with Group Leaders' primary work responsibilities.

As noted earlier, the majority of respondents expressed concern about the amount of time required to prepare an *Incredible Years* session. It was noted that the sequence of the resource manuals was not user-friendly and that the content for the programme sessions extended across four separate resource manuals. This, the participants felt was cumbersome and time consuming. The ease of delivering any programme has an impact on its successful implementation. It is suggested that the reorganisation of the sequence of the resource manuals by programme session should simplify the preparation of these sessions.

7.2.8 Incredible Years Policies and Procedures

KEY FINDING

The *Incredible Years Limerick* policies and procedures were identified as being similar to school/setting policies and procedures, and therefore complemented them and eased delivery of the programme.

Almost half (49%) of the Group Leaders who responded to the survey instrument were not aware of the *Incredible Years Limerick* policies and procedures. However, those who were aware of such documentation specified that the *Incredible Years* policies and procedures were similar to their school/work setting policies and procedures, and therefore complemented them. The lack of awareness of policies and procedures among such a proportionally high number of stakeholders has raised concerns for the evaluation team. It would be beneficial if all Group Leaders had access to their personal copy of all relevant documentation when engaging with *Incredible Years Limerick* in the future.

We recommend that the cohesion identified between the *Incredible Years* policies and procedures and the school/setting policies and procedures should be emphasised. Once awareness of *Incredible Years Limerick* policies and procedures is increased, this cohesion will contribute to the ease of delivering and adopting the programme in schools and settings, and therefore contribute to the longer-term sustainability of the programme in Limerick.

7.3 Impact, Costs and Benefits of *Incredible Years Limerick*

This section draws together the main conclusions of the evaluation relative to the impact, costs and benefits of delivering the *Incredible Years Limerick* initiative. It presents the key findings relative to the impact of the programme in Limerick, the costs associated with delivering it, and the benefits accrued. The discussion contained within this section draws together conclusions that contribute to the evaluation recommendations.

Ultimately, this evaluation sought to determine whether or not *Incredible Years Limerick* contributed to the prevention and treatment of behavioural problems in participating children. Therefore, the expected outcomes for the children engaged directly with the programme, or whose parents or teachers were engaged with the programme would include:

- An increase in children's positive social interactions with adults and peers,
- Increased pro-social behaviours, and
- A decrease in disruptive behaviours among the children.

This section assess whether or not such outcomes were achieved.

KEY FINDING

There were increases in the number of children rated as falling within the 'normal' classification post-programme delivery and fewer children in the 'borderline' and 'abnormal' classification.

One of the key elements of the evaluation was to examine the outcomes associated with *Incredible Years Limerick,* specifically the outcomes relating to the children targeted by the programmes. The examination of the pre- and post-programme measures gathered using the SDQs illustrated that there was a significant increase in the number of children rated within the 'normal' behaviour range post-programme delivery, and a corresponding decrease in the number of children in the 'borderline' and 'abnormal' categories. These changes, rated by parents and teachers, can be interpreted as resulting in a decrease in children's negative behaviour for parents to deal with in the home context (with an increased number of children in the 'normal' category on the peer problems and pro-social scales) and more engaged learning environments within the school context (with an increased number of children in the 'normal' category on the hyperactivity scale). Such findings would also suggest that each of the expected outcomes identified above (increases in children's positive social interactions with adults and peers; increases in pro-social behaviour; and decreases in

disruptive behaviours among the children) have, to some extent, been achieved. This may, in turn, have an impact on the children's own lives, their families' lives and on the school environment.

KEY FINDING

The parent-rated and teacher-rated scales of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) illustrated an increase in the number of children classified as 'normal' across all five subscales (emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity, peer problems and pro-social subscales) post-programme delivery, when compared against pre-programme delivery data.

Fundamentally, the success of *Incredible Years Limerick* requires positive outcomes for participating children and families. Due to the time constraints of this evaluation, it was not possible to examine long-term impacts on children's behaviour. However, the evaluation findings facilitated the identification of a number of immediate and short-term positive outcomes for children and their families. These were identified through the parent- and teacher-rated scales of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, which illustrated an increase in the number of children classified as 'normal' across all five subscales (emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity, peer problems and pro-social subscales) post-programme delivery, when compared against pre-programme delivery rates. Paired samples t-tests[31] of the same instrument, illustrated that these increases were statistically significant in the teacher-rated Hyperactivity Subscale and the Total Difficulty Scale, and in the parent-rated Peer Problems Subscale and Pro-Social Subscale, which would indicate that the expected outcomes in relation to behaviour and social skills were being achieved.

In addition, the Teacher Classroom Management Programme displayed statistically significant improvements across the Student Engagement Scale and the Classroom Management Scale. In addition, teacher satisfaction with the Classroom Management Programme was also very high and most teachers agreed that they would recommend the programme to colleagues. This increase in teachers' sense of efficacy and their expressed satisfaction with the programme may, in turn: influence the quality of teacher engagement with the *Incredible Years* programme; positively influence outcomes for the children and their

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[31] The paired samples t-test is used to compare two small sets of quantitative data when data in each sample set are related in a special way. The test is generally used when measurements are taken from the same subject before and after some manipulation (in this case the *Incredible Years* intervention). The test determines the significance of a difference before and after administration of the intervention.

families; and contribute to the long-term sustainability of the *Incredible Years* initiative in Limerick City.

KEY FINDING

Group Leaders and Strategic Steering Group members outlined that they had observed improvements in children's behaviour both within and outside the classroom, and had witnessed children implementing the *Incredible Years* behavioural strategies and vocabulary.

Observed improvements were also evident in children's behaviour. Group Leaders and Strategic Steering Group members outlined that they had witnessed children implementing the *Incredible Years* strategies and vocabulary both within and outside the classroom / delivery setting.

While a full cost benefit analysis was beyond the scope of this evaluation, findings suggest that *Incredible Years Limerick* has contributed to the generation of significant positive outcomes for children and their families, as identified through the parent- and teacher-rated SDQs. Therefore, heightened levels of child retention on the *Incredible Years* programmes may ultimately result in positive outcomes for those children.

7.4 Evaluation Aims and Objectives

This evaluation aimed to achieve a number of key objectives under the strands: (i) the management, implementation and delivery of *Incredible Years Limerick* and (ii) the impact of *Incredible Years Limerick*. Each individual strand worked towards the achievement of distinct objectives as outlined below.

7.4.1 Management, Implementation and Delivery of Incredible Years Limerick

This element of the evaluation aimed to explore the following:

- The overall aims and objectives of the intervention and their relevance to the target population;
- The quality and extent of partnership and communication between the relevant stakeholders;
- The level and effectiveness of support to project partners and stakeholders to engage in the *Incredible Years* programmes;
- The quality and effectiveness of the policies and procedures;

117

- The appropriateness of resources provided;
- The sustainability of the programme; and
- The ability of the project to adapt to context – specifically temporal and spatial circumstances.

7.4.2 Impact of Incredible Years Limerick

The primary objective of the programme impact element of the evaluation was to assess the impact of *Incredible Years Limerick* on its programme users. This evaluation has chronicled the considerable strengths of the *Incredible Years* programme and has also identified specific areas of improvement that will inform the future practice of the programme.

The primary aim of the evaluation was to ascertain if *Incredible Years Limerick* has met its objectives. As outlined in Chapter 1, the project's objectives can be inferred from what are documented in initial planning materials as its desired outcomes. In the context of the evaluation, these relate to the two areas just considered, namely project management, implementation and delivery, and project impact. Based on the analysis of evaluation data overall, it can be concluded that the project has met its objectives. Teachers and parents perceived positive changes in behaviour and/or social interactions in the children engaged in the programmes or affected by the programmes. More significantly for the future, while some work is required in revisiting aims and target group issues, the core project objectives in relation to achieving positive change for children with specific behavioural needs and their families remain highly relevant.

7.5 Evaluation Recommendations

The evaluation recommendations are presented in two sections below: (i) future programme delivery, and (ii) recommendations in relation to future evaluations of *Incredible Years Limerick.*

7.5.1 Future Programme Delivery

This study identified eight key areas that should be considered in relation to reviewing the future delivery this programme. They are: (i) commitment of *Incredible Years Limerick* stakeholders; (ii) interagency collaboration and communication (iii) programme content, resources and materials, (iv) parental engagement, (v) training and accreditation, (vi) peer support, (vii) time commitments, and (viii) *Incredible Years Limerick* policies and procedures. Recommendations relative to each area are detailed in Table 28 below.

Table 28: IY Evaluation Recommendations: Future Programme Delivery	
Recommendation	**Rationale**
1. COMMITMENT OF *INCREDIBLE YEARS LIMERICK* STAKEHOLDERS	
1.1 Heightened levels of dedication and commitment should be maintained through on-going support and consultation with Group Leaders, Programme Staff and members of the Strategic Steering Group.	A significant level of overall dedication and commitment from the Group Leaders, Programme Staff and members of the Strategic Steering Group was identified through the evaluation.
2. INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION	
2.1 Consideration must be given to the possibility of sustaining a co-ordinating body or of developing procedures to replace such a resource.	The work of PAUL Partnership as a co-ordinating body has resulted in successful collaboration between and across *Incredible Years Limerick* agencies and stakeholders.
2.2 It is recommended that all stakeholders agree on a comprehensive list/schedule of *Incredible Years Limerick* events at the beginning of each academic year and that consideration be given to the introduction of a text messaging reminder system to encourage higher levels of attendance.	This establishment of calendar dates at the beginning of the year will help to promote higher levels of attendance at *Incredible Years* meetings, peer support sessions and training events. Consideration should be given to the fact that some agencies may need to support attendance through staff substitution or recognition of time spent outside of normal working hours.
3. PROGRAMME CONTENT, RESOURCES AND MATERIALS	
3.1 It is recommended that the *Incredible Years Limerick* programme should be promoted and the evaluation findings disseminated - highlighting that it is a fun, enjoyable, engaging, effective and positive experience for parents and children.	The evaluation found that the programme was comprehensive and engaging, and that the programme dovetails well with the primary school curriculum and with schools' and agencies' own policies and procedures.

3.2	Greater emphasis should be given to the elements relating to Conduct Problems and Pro-Social Development within the child and parent programmes.	This recommendation is founded on the less defined results obtained as a result of the paired samples t-test conducted on the parent- and teacher-rated SDQ data.
3.3	Additional consideration should be given to the Emotional Symptoms element and Hyperactivity element of the child and parent programmes, and the Peer Problem element within the teacher programme.	Although not as pronounced as the findings that emerged through 3.2 above, these elements also require consideration.
3.4	The practicality of developing a DVD within an Irish context that would be relevant to Limerick participants should be explored with due respect for copyright and fidelity to the programme.	This would ensure the appropriateness of the DVD vignettes to a Limerick audience. At a minimum, the cultural context and language of the DVD should be highlighted for the audience prior to using the DVD - a strategy already used by several Group Leaders.
3.5	It is recommended that alternative methods of engaging older children are explored and designed.	The *Incredible Years* puppets have been identified as being inappropriate for use with children in the senior classes of an Irish primary school. An exploration of alternative methodologies and materials would help ensure greater effectiveness with older age groups, and thus contribute to a whole-school behaviour management strategy.
3.6	The introduction of new measures to streamline the processes for requesting resources and materials is advised.	All resource materials necessary for training and delivery of the *Incredible Years* programme need to be sourced and delivered so that programme delivery is not compromised. At a minimum, Group Leaders should be made aware of the expected delivery date of the requested resources.
**4. PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT**	
4.1	The evaluation team recommends a review of approaches for increasing and retaining parental engagement both during the lifetime of parental engagement with the *Incredible Years* parent programme and beyond.	Parental engagement is of paramount importance to the success of *Incredible Years Limerick*. This review should include an examination of national and international best practice and research relative to parental engagement and partnership with families.

4.2	It is suggested that the materials be differentiated to suit all needs and that parents with different levels of need, experience and skills are encouraged to attend parent programmes to allow for peer learning opportunities.	Consideration must be given to the needs of local parents with regard to the parent programme e.g., methods of engaging and retaining parents with low literacy levels or with little prior experience of positive engagement with adult education opportunities.
4.3	It is recommended that positive links be developed between *Incredible Years Limerick* and local adult education bodies to allow for the delivery of adult literacy classes and/or private parent tutoring.	Preparation courses or pre- *Incredible Years* training could be a useful mechanism to engage parents who are not ready to engage immediately with the *Incredible Years* programme.
4.4	The evaluation team recommends that the Strategic Steering Group further explore the possible benefits of engaging the parents of children participating in the *Incredible Years* programmes.	Although it was not within the scope of the current evaluation to examine the effectiveness or outcomes associated with engaging parents of participating children, a number of settings have employed procedures to ensure that parents of children engaged with the *Incredible Years* programme are encouraged to participate in the parent training aspect of the programme.
4.5	Possibilities for training/accrediting parents who have completed an *Incredible Years* programme and who wish to pursue the programme further should be considered.	A number of parents who had participated in the *Incredible Years* parent programme expressed the desire to undertake further training and gain accreditation as trainers. Accredited parents could help to build the sustainability of *Incredible Years Limerick* by ensuring the existence of local, accredited trainers, who could also act as peer mentors for future parent participants. The presence of peer mentors may result in greater effectiveness, longevity and sustainability of the programme locally.
4.6	Although the introduction of incentives to encourage parental engagement can be useful, the use of monetary incentives is not sustainable and current practices relative to such should therefore be reviewed.	The evaluation team questions the long-term sustainability of the use of monetary incentives.

	5. TRAINING AND ACCREDITATION	
5.1	The evaluation team recommends that accreditation be introduced as a compulsory element of *Incredible Years Limerick,* and that an incentivised scheme is introduced to encourage the participation of all stakeholders in training and accreditation.	To contribute to the quality of the delivery of *Incredible Years Limerick*, those stakeholders (in particular the Group Leaders) who have not pursued training or accreditation must be encouraged to do so.
5.2	The evaluation team recommends the establishment of a local panel of accredited *Incredible Years* trainers to allow for the local provision of continuing professional development opportunities.	This would contribute to the long-term sustainability of the *Incredible Years* programme in Limerick as a result of the cost effectiveness of that contribution.
	6. PEER SUPPORT	
6.1	The evaluation team recommends the establishment of a peer support network, which is solely structured around the sharing of experiences and lessons learned, as well as accessing support and advice from local *Incredible Years* colleagues.	Peer support was identified as a valuable resource among evaluation participants (Group Leaders in particular), who felt that the meetings were not used appropriately. Group Leaders felt that these meetings offered a valuable opportunity to share experiences and practices of what works and doesn't work; as well as to learn from and support one another in their *Incredible Years* roles.
	7. TIME COMMITMENTS	
7.1	It is recommended that the resource manuals be restructured according to programme session, rather than elements of sessions being spread across four separate manuals – as is currently the case.	This restructuring of the manuals would help to ease delivery and reduce preparation time for programme sessions.

	8. *INCREDIBLE YEARS LIMERICK* POLICIES AND PROCEDURES	
8.1	The development of a Group Leader Pack, containing all relevant *Incredible Years* policies and procedures is advised.	This should be made available to all Group Leaders without delay and should be reviewed on a regular basis. This documentation should highlight the positive aspects of *Incredible Years Limerick*, as identified by evaluation participants and international evaluation research. In particular, it would be useful if the documents highlighted that the programmes are enjoyable and that they dovetail well with the primary school curriculum and with school/setting policies and procedures. In addition, the pack should contain: ■ Information relative to the origins of *Incredible Years Limerick;* ■ Detailed information on the structures of the local initiative, including reporting structures, the agencies involved in the delivery and advising of the initiative locally; ■ All relevant *Incredible Years Limerick* policies and procedures e.g., child protection policies and training and accreditation policies.

7.5.2 Future Evaluation of Incredible Years Limerick

In the event of future evaluations of *Incredible Years Limerick,* the following recommendations should be considered:

Table 29: IY Evaluation Recommendations: Future Evaluations		
Recommendation		**Rationale**
1.1	The evaluation team recommends the introduction of complementary evaluative instruments that allow for the collection of measurable, impartial and objective data.	The employment of such instruments would remove the total reliance on teacher-rated and parent-rated quantitative measures.
1.2	The development of a more defined and specific parent-completed and teacher-completed rating scale (perhaps incorporating a 5- / 7- / 10-point scale) is recommended for future evaluations.	This would provide more detailed and precise data than the current SDQ rating scale allows for.
1.3	It is highly recommended that qualitative data from children, their families and their teachers are included in future evaluations.	Although parents' and teachers'/setting staff views and opinions were accessed to an extent in the current evaluation, the children's opinions were not sought. The use of qualitative methods would not only allow future evaluators to access multiple perspectives, but it would also complement the quantitative methods employed in the current evaluation.
1.4	Consideration should be given to the possibility of introducing a longitudinal element (including comparable / control trial elements), to the evaluation of *Incredible Years Limerick*.	This would allow for the assessment of long-term outcomes for children and their families as well as a more in-depth analysis of the true costs and benefits of the project.
1.5	The evaluation team suggests the development of case studies of families, children and schools participating in *Incredible Years Limerick.*	This would allow future evaluators to examine the multiple programme-engagement effect on the small number of children who engaged with multiple *Incredible Years* programmes in Limerick.

7.6 Evaluation Conclusion

The primary aim of this evaluation was to determine if *Incredible Years Limerick* has met its objectives. Based on the preceding analysis it can be concluded that the project has met its objectives. However, the Limerick-based intervention can also assert strengths that are unique to its context - as determined by the evaluation participants. Such strengths will not alone contribute to the sustainability of the programme in the future, but will also enhance self-esteem and confidence amongst the administrators and facilitators; strengthen the argument for future funding; but most importantly contribute to outcomes for children living in Limerick City who engage with the *Incredible Years Limerick* programme.

Some of the key strengths identified through this evaluation included: perceived and observed positive changes in behaviour and / or social interactions in the children engaged with the programmes; highly committed stakeholders who are positively disposed towards the programme; good relationships and communication between and across agencies that are involved in the delivery of *Incredible Years Limerick*; an acknowledgement that the programme content is enjoyable, fun, engaging and positive for children and parents; a peer support network that is viewed as being highly valuable; policies and procedures that are easily delivered in school and setting contexts due to their complementary nature; and increases in the number of children rated as falling within the 'normal' classification post-programme delivery and fewer children in the 'borderline' and 'abnormal' classification. In conclusion, although a number of challenges that require consideration were identified, the evaluation team deduce that they were far out-weighed by the strengths associated with the implementation of *Incredible Years Limerick.* Such perceived strengths associated with *Incredible Years Limerick* are captured in the following quote:

> *"It provides pupils with the skills and vocabulary, an understanding of feelings etc. That is, tools which may prevent or treat behavioural problems in their lives. I feel that by providing children with these 'tools' we are setting the pupils up for success in managing and self-regulation of their behaviours - we help in preventing misbehaviour"* (Group Leader Perspective).

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Appendices

Appendix A: *Incredible Years* Programme Outputs and Outcomes[32]

Parent Training	
Outputs for Parents	**Outcomes for Children**
Increase parents' positive communication skills, such as the use of praise and positive feedback to children, and reduce the use of criticism and unnecessary commands	Increase children's social skills
Improve parents' limit-setting skills by replacing spanking and other negative physical behaviours with non-violent discipline techniques and by promoting positive strategies such as ignoring the child's behaviour, allowing for logical consequences, providing redirection, and developing problem-solving and empathy skills	Increase children's problem-solving skills and effective anger-management strategies
Improve parents' problem-solving skills and anger-management	Decrease children's negative attributions and increase empathy skills
Increase family support networks and school involvement	Decrease children's aggressive behaviour and related conduct problems such as non-compliance, peer bullying and rejection, stealing and lying
	Increase children's school readiness and academic competence

Teacher Training	
Outputs for Teachers	**Outcomes for Children**
Increase teachers' positive communication skills, such as the use of praise and positive feedback to students, and reduce the use of criticism and unnecessary commands	Increase children's social, emotional and academic skills
Improve teachers' limit-setting skills	Increase children's problem-solving skills and effective anger-management strategies
Improve teachers' problem-solving skills and anger-management with students	Increase children's positive peer interactions and friendships
Increase teachers' support networks	Decrease children's negative attributions and increase empathy skills
Increase teachers' positive involvement with parents	Decrease children's aggressive oppositional behaviour and related conduct problems
Promote teachers' proactive teaching strategies in regard to social, emotional and academic competence	

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[32] Extract from: Archways (2007b: 26).

Child Training	
Outputs for Children	**Outcomes for Children**
Detect, understand and accept and verbalise feelings in themselves and others	Promote social competence and peer acceptance through development of problem-solving and communication skills
Learn inter-personal cognitive problem-solving (such as the ability to identify and define social problems, generate solutions, consider alternatives and make a plan)	Enhance peer relationships
Learn anger-management and self-control skills	Reduce conduct problems and peer rejection
Learn the behaviours necessary to be friendly such as helping, sharing, and teamwork behaviours	Foster increased self-esteem
Learn effective communication skills for talking to other children such as telling, listening, asking, supporting, speaking-up, praising and apologising	Prevent long-term negative consequences of social skill deficits and conduct problems
Learn effective school behaviours such as listening, waiting, concentrating and cooperating	
Learn group skills including active participation, cooperation, leadership and group decision-making	
Develop self-esteem and self-confidence	

Appendix B: Information Leaflet and Consent Form
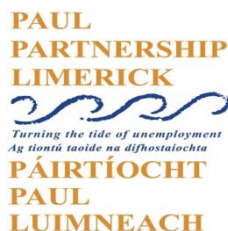
Incredible Years Limerick Evaluation
Participant Information Leaflet

Incredible Years Evaluation: Programme Management

The Targeting Educational Disadvantage (TED) project in Mary Immaculate College have been contracted to carry out an evaluation of the programme management and programme impact of *Incredible Years Limerick* on behalf of PAUL Partnership.

Why is the evaluation being done?

The evaluation is being carried out so that PAUL Partnership can see how the *Incredible Years* programmes are being delivered and if they are having the impact they are expected to have. The evaluation will also indicate possible improvements that might be made to the programme.

What will be involved?

The evaluation team at TED will interview and conduct focus groups with management and project support staff involved in *Incredible Years Limerick*, regarding programmes that are being delivered and their effectiveness. They will also examine information collected by the programme about participants as another measure of programme impact.

The current section of the evaluation concerns programme management. This will be explored through Focus Group discussions to which you, as a member of the programme operational group, are being asked to contribute.

These discussions will be held at programme locations throughout Limerick and will last for one hour. Your contributions will be most valuable in assessing the programme management to date.

Recording and Storing of Information Gathered:

The discussions with management and staff members will be digitally recorded so that the evaluator can listen to the recordings at a later date and make a note of anything important that was said. These recordings will be destroyed after the evaluation has been completed.

At the end of the focus group, the evaluator will briefly run through the main points made in the discussion and check that you are satisfied with the discussions. When

information from all participants has been gathered and analysed, a final report will be written up.

All information that the evaluators collect from management and project staff will be maintained securely by the evaluators. This information will be used to write up an interim evaluation report and a final report and will not otherwise be made available to any other party/parties. Every effort will be made to ensure your anonymity within the final report. However, some participants may hold a post that makes their perspective more identifiable.

All participants will be invited to respond to the final evaluation report, this will allow you, as a participant, to ensure that the information gathered with you has been recorded and represented accurately.

Informed Consent:
The consent form (attached) indicates your agreement to participate in the evaluation. Although all *Incredible Years* project staff and programme group leaders are being encouraged to take part in the evaluation, you do have the right to refuse to participate and to withdraw at any stage throughout the evaluation.

Additional Information:
Please do not hesitate to contact Fiona O'Connor at fiona.oconnor@mic.ul.ie for further information relating to the evaluation and/ or the ethical procedures underpinning it.

If you have concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent, you may contact:
Emma Barry
MIREC Administrator
Mary Immaculate College
South Circular Road
Limerick
061-204515
emma.barry@mic.ul.ie

Incredible Years Limerick Evaluation
Participant Consent Form

SIGNING THIS FORM WILL INDICATE:

(i)   That you have agreed to take part in the evaluation of *Incredible Years Limerick*.

(ii)   That you consent to participate in focus groups or interview discussions on *Incredible Years Limerick* with the evaluators from the Targeting Educational Disadvantage project/Curriculum Development Unit in Mary Immaculate College, Limerick.

SIGNING THIS FORM ALSO MEANS THAT YOU HAVE READ AND HAVE UNDERSTOOD THE INFORMATION OUTLINED ABOVE.

You may access a copy of your signed consent form from the evaluation team at any stage, should you so wish.

For further information contact: Fiona O'Connor
                                     TED, Curriculum Development Unit
                                     Mary Immaculate College, South Circular Road,
                                     Limerick
Tel: 061—204574   Email: *fiona.oconnor@mic.ul.ie*

Agreement to discuss *Incredible Years Limerick* with evaluator(s)	
Name (BLOCK CAPITALS):	
Signature:	
Date:	
Programme Location:	

Name of Evaluator (BLOCK):	
Signature of Evaluator:	
Date:	

Appendix C: *Incredible Years* Strategic Steering Group Focus Group / Interview Instrument

00.00   Welcome, Introductions to people and evaluation, & housekeeping

00.01   Outline
- Rationale for interview i.e. to examine implementation of IY and how it is working.
- Structure of Focus Group i.e. 60 minutes in total.
- 3 topics will be discussed.

00.02   Topic 1: Development of IY Limerick
- What first drew you to *Incredible Years* programmes?
- Why do you think was IY selected for rollout in Limerick?
- Have you attended IY training? Which training?
- What were your expectations for IY in Limerick at the beginning? Were they met?
- **Anything to add?**

00.20   Topic 2: Management, Implementation and Delivery of *Incredible Years*
- What are your views of how implementation is working in Limerick (communication, partnerships, relationships between partner organisations and stakeholders, retention of participants, etc.)?
- How effective is the support provided to project partners and stakeholders in helping them to engage with IY programmes? E.g. quality and effectiveness of policies and procedures?
- Management and distribution of resources, how is this working? (puppets, DVDs etc.)
- How appropriate are the resources to the local context?
- How does the project adapt to local circumstances? To changing circumstances?
- Can you identify particular strengths of the management and delivery of IY in Limerick / and any challenges?
- **Anything to add?**

00.40   Topic 3: The Future of *Incredible Years*
- Have you any recommendations for the future management of IY?
- What advice would you offer to similar agencies preparing to deliver IY?
- How could IY delivery be improved?
- Do you expect *Incredible Years* to continue to be part of your / PAUL's work?
- What are your hopes for IY?
- **Anything to add?**

00.55   Thanks & End

Appendix D: *Incredible Years* Programme Operational Group Focus Group / Interview Instrument

00.00   Welcome, Introductions to people and evaluation, and Housekeeping
- Welcome.
- Length of workshop; closest toilets; reminder and permission to record.
- Facilitator will lead into topics but should not be viewed as a "participant".

00.03   Outline and Ground Rules
- Rationale for workshop i.e. to examine implementation of IY and how it is working.
- Structure of workshop i.e. 55 minutes in total that will start with discussion, then activities and finally feedback.
- Respect for others i.e. when one person talking, respect them and allow them to finish before you talk.
- Outline that 3 topics will be discussed throughout the workshop.

00.04   Topic 1: Development of *Incredible Years* and Participants' Roles in IY Limerick
Discussion Group (the main points from each question below to be recorded on flip chart).
- Have you each heard of *Incredible Years*? When, where, how? – expand
- What do they know about *Incredible Years*?
- What do they know about the development of IY, Limerick?
- Do they know why IY is being used in their setting?
- Have they had training in IY? Which training?
- What do they expect from IY?

00.41   Topic 2: Implementation, Management and Co-ordination
- Can you tell me a little about the policies and procedures in place for IY programmes?
- How do you report to the management committee?
- How often do you meet with line-managers/supervisors?
- Tell me about communication in general?
- What about working in partnership, with relevant stakeholders?
- How were participants in the programmes targeted and recruited? What methods were used for contacting participants and engaging them in the programmes? How are they encouraged to stay with the programmes they've signed up for?
- What supports are in place for you in carrying out your work? Are there clear pathways for accessing support mechanisms? Comments?
- What about resources? Are you supported in terms of budget and/or resources and are there clear pathways for accessing these? (e.g. puppets, Dina videos etc.)

00.25   Feedback: Management
Discussion (to reach agreement collectively) on the main statements and record on a flip chart.

00.30 **Co-ordination**
Could you comment on each of these aspects of the IY programmes in small groups and feedback?
- Partnership and quality of stakeholder input.
- Team-working.
- Co-ordination.
- Communication between stakeholders and partners.
- Data collection.

00.38 **Feedback: Co-ordination**

00.40 **Topic 3:** *Incredible Years* **Delivery**
- Adaptability, including balance between IY programme curriculum and local context.
- Strengths and weaknesses.
- Key learning.
- Barriers?
- How could IY delivery be improved?

00.48 **Feedback: Delivery**

00.50 **Final Rounds and Discussion**
Round questions
1. Express your hopes for IY.
2. Identify challenges.
3. Express yourself (anything to add?)
   - Answers recorded on flipchart
   - Open to discussion -- did anybody hear anything in the round that they feel they'd like to expand on (Use Flipchart as aide memoire)?

00.55 **Collective agreement on hopes, challenges and opinions**

00.59 **Thanks & End.**

Appendix E: *Incredible Years* Programme Staff Semi-Structured Interview Instrument

00.00   Welcome, Introductions to people & evaluation, and Housekeeping

00.05   Outline
- Rationale for interview i.e. to examine implementation of IY and how it is working.
- Structure of interview i.e. 30 minutes in total.
- Outline that 3 topics will be discussed.

00.06   Topic 1: Background to IY and Participant's Role in IY Limerick
- Have you heard of *Incredible Years*? When, where, how? Expand.
- What do you know about *Incredible Years*?
- Do you know why IY was selected for rollout in Limerick?
- Have you had training in IY? Which training?
- What do you expect from IY?

00.21   Topic 2: Implementation, Management and Delivery
- Can you tell me a little about the development of the programme here in Limerick?
- How are communications between programme operational staff and management organised? And between programme staff and between stakeholders?
- How would you describe relationships with the partner organisations; between the partner organisations; between partner organisations and the participants in the IY programmes?
- How effective is the support provided to project partners and stakeholders in helping them to engage with IY programmes?
- Management and distribution of resources (puppets, DVDs etc.) How appropriate are the resources in the local context?
- Can you identify particular strengths of the management and delivery of IY in Limerick/ and any challenges?

00.26   Anything to add?

00.41   Topic 3: *Incredible Years* delivery: Future
- What are your hopes for IY?
- What advice would you offer to similar agencies preparing to deliver IY?
- How could IY delivery be improved?
- Do you expect *Incredible Years* to continue to be part of your / PAUL's work?
  Anything to add?

00.30   Thanks & End.

Appendix F: Programme Management – Phase 2 Survey

<u>Section 1: Personal Information</u>

Name
What is your name?

Gender		
	Code	**Insert √ in relevant box**
Are you …?	**Male**	
	Female	

Geographic Area	**Code**	**Insert √ in relevant box**
St. Munchin's	**StMu**	
Southill	**SH**	
St. Mary's	**StMa**	
Moyross	**Moy**	
Our Lady of Lourdes	**OLOL**	
Our Lady Queen of Peace	**QOP**	
Limerick City	**LC**	

Programme Delivery Location	**Code**	**Insert √ in relevant box**
Barnardos Islandgate	**BI**	
Corpus Christi National School	**CCNS**	
Gaelscoil Sheoirse Clancy	**GSC**	
Health Service Executive	**HSE**	
Limerick Social Services Centre	**SSC**	
Our Lady of Lourdes National School	**OLLNS**	
Our Lady Queen of Peace National School	**OLQPNS**	
Paul Partnership	**PP**	
Southill Junior School	**SJS**	
St. Lelia's School	**SLGNS**	
St. Mary's Boys' National School	**BNS**	
St. Munchin's Family Resource Centre	**FRC**	
St. Munchin's Girls' National School	**GNS**	

Programme Type	**Code**	**Insert √ in relevant boxes (please tick as many as appropriate)**
Basic Parent Programme	**BPP**	
Small Group Dina Programme	**SGD**	
Dina in the Classroom Programme	**DIC**	
Teacher Classroom Management Programme	**TCM**	

What is your role in Incredible Years delivery in Limerick?	**Code**	**Insert √ in relevant box**
Manager	**MAN**	
Co-ordinator	**CO**	
Teacher	**TE**	
Group Leader	**GL**	
Project Support Staff	**PSS**	
Other (Please specify)		

Section 2: Background to your Involvement with Incredible Years

2.1   How long have you been working in education/child development?

_____ years _____ months

2.2   How long have you been involved in Incredible Years?

_____ years _____ months

2.3   How did you first become aware of Incredible Years?

2.4   How did you become involved in delivering Incredible Years in Limerick?

2.5   Have you completed training in Incredible Years?

Yes ………………………… ☐   No ………………………….. ☐

2.5.1   If 'YES', please tick the training courses that you completed:

BASIC Parent Programme …………………☐   Advanced Parent Programme.. ☐

Small Group Dina …………………………☐   Dina in the Classroom ……… ☐

Teacher Classroom Management Training…☐

Other (please specify): _____

Section 3: Incredible Years in Limerick

3.1   Do you know why Incredible Years was chosen for delivery in Limerick?

Yes ………………………… ☐   No …………………………….. ☐

3.1.1   If 'YES', please explain why Incredible Years was chosen for delivery in Limerick?

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3.2   Are you aware of the agencies that oversee the delivery and management of Incredible Years in Limerick?

Yes ………………………… ☐   No …………………………….. ☐

3.2.1   If 'YES', please list the agencies that you know are involved in the delivery and management of Incredible Years in Limerick?

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3.3   How often do you interact with the agencies that deliver and manage Incredible Years in Limerick?

Once a day …………….…☐   Less than once a month …………….☐

Twice or more a day ………. ☐   Once a month ……………………… ☐

Once a week ……………….. ☐   Twice or more a month …………….☐

Twice or more a week ………☐   Other (please specify): _____

3.3.1 Is the majority of that interaction:

Face-to-face ………...☐   By phone ………….. ☐

By mail / email ……..☐   Other (please specify): _____

3.4   Do you think that interaction with the agencies that deliver and manage Incredible Years could be improved in any way?

Yes ……………………… ☐   No ………………………….. ☐

3.4.1 If 'YES', please explain how you feel interactions with the agencies that deliver and manage Incredible Years could be improved:

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3.4.2 If 'NO', please explain how you feel interactions with the agencies that deliver and manage Incredible Years are working well:

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3.5   Do you feel you get enough support from the agencies that deliver and manage Incredible Years in Limerick?

Yes ……………………… ☐   No ………………………….. ☐

3.5.1   If 'NO', please explain how you feel the agencies involved could give you more support?

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3.6   Do you know what Incredible Years Peer Support is?

Yes ………………………… ☐   No ………………………….. ☐

If 'NO', please move to Question 3.7.

3.6.1   Please explain (in your own words) what it is?

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3.6.2   Did you find Incredible Years Peer Support to be beneficial?

Yes ………………………… ☐   No ………………………….. ☐

3.6.3   If 'YES', in what way did you find Incredible Years Peer Support beneficial?

```
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3.6.4 If 'NO', please identify how you feel Incredible Years Peer Support could be more beneficial?

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```

3.7 Are you aware of any of the Incredible Years policies and procedures?

Yes ………………………… ☐   No ………………………….. ☐

If 'NO', please move to Question 3.8.

3.7.1 Please list/describe the policies and procedures that you are aware of?

```



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3.7.2 Please identify the aspects of those policies and procedures that are working well in your setting:

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3.7.3 Do you think the Incredible Years policies and procedures could be improved in any way?

```

```

3.8 Are you aware of any other supports available under *Incredible Years Limerick*?

Yes ………………………… ☐   No ………………………….. ☐

3.8.1 If 'YES', please provide details of the other supports available:

```

```

3.8.2 If 'NO', please identify additional supports that would make the Incredible Years programmes more effective in your setting?

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3.9 Please list the materials/resources that were made available to you under Incredible Years?

```

```

3.9.1 How useful were the materials/resources that you were provided with for Incredible Years?

Very Useful ………………… ☐   Not at all useful …………….☐

Useful ………...…………….. ☐   Don't know …………………☐

3.9.2 Please suggest ways that the materials/resources could be improved?

```



```

Section 4: Delivery of Incredible Years programmes

4.1 Do you know how participants were selected/recruited for the Incredible Years programmes that you are involved with?

Yes ………………………… ☐   No ………………………….. ☐

4.1.1 If 'YES', please explain how they were selected:

```



```

4.2 Are you satisfied with the Incredible Years programmes that you work with in your setting?

Yes ………………………… ☐   No ………………………….. ☐

4.2.1 If 'YES', please explain why:

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```

4.3 **In your opinion, do you think the Incredible Years programmes that you work with are sustainable as they currently stands?**

Yes ………………………… ☐   No ………………………….. ☐

    4.3.1 **If 'YES', please name the elements that make the Incredible Years programmes sustainable?**

    4.3.2 **If 'NO', please explain how you feel they could be made more sustainable:**

4.4 **Please identify any key strengths of the Incredible Years programmes that you work with?**

4.5 **Please identify any barriers or challenges to the Incredible Years programmes that you work with?**

Section 5: Programme Impact

5.1   **Do you feel that the Incredible Years programmes that you work with <u>prevent</u> behavioural problems in 2 – 10 year old children?**

Yes ………………………… ☐   No ………………………….. ☐

       5.1.1   Please explain why you think the programmes do/do not <u>prevent</u> behavioural problems in 2 – 10 year olds:

5.2   **Do you feel that the Incredible Years programmes that you work with <u>treat</u> behavioural problems in 2 – 10 year old children?**

Yes ………………………… ☐   No ………………………….. ☐

       5.2.1   Please explain why you think the programmes do/do not <u>treat</u> behavioural problems in 2 – 10 year olds:

5.3 **If you <u>facilitated</u> a Parent Programme, please complete this section.**
If you did not facilitate a Parent Programme, please move to section 5.4.

Parent Programme					
In my opinion, the *BASIC Parent Programme* has helped…	**Agree Strongly**	**Agree**	**Don't Know**	**Disagree**	**Disagree Strongly**
Increase parents' use of praise and positive feedback to children					
Reduce parents' use of criticism and unnecessary commands					
Parents replace spanking and other negative physical behaviours with non-violent discipline techniques					
Parents promote positive strategies such as ignoring the child's behaviour, allowing for logical consequences, providing redirection, and developing problem-solving and empathy skills					
In my opinion, the *BASIC Parent Programme* has helped…	**Agree Strongly**	**Agree**	**Don't Know**	**Disagree**	**Disagree Strongly**
Improve parents' problem-solving skills and anger-management					
Increase family support networks					
Increase family-school involvement					
Increase children's social skills					
Increase children's problem-solving skills					
Increase children's effective anger-management strategies					
Decrease children's negative attributions					
Increase children's empathy skills					
Decrease children's aggressive behaviour					
Decrease children's conduct problems (such as: non-compliance, peer bullying and rejection, stealing and lying)					
Increase children's school readiness					
Increase children's academic competence					

➡️ 5.4 If you <u>facilitated</u> a Child Programme (Small Group Dina and/or Dina in the Classroom), please complete this section.
If you did not facilitate a Child Programme, please move to section 5.5.

Child Programmes					
In my opinion, the *Dina in the Classroom* and *Small Group Dina* Programmes have helped…	**Agree Strongly**	**Agree**	**Don't Know**	**Disagree**	**Disagree Strongly**
Children detect, understand and accept and verbalise feelings in themselves and others					
Children learn inter-personal cognitive problem-solving (such as the ability to identify and define social problems, generate solutions, consider alternatives and make a plan					
In my opinion, the *Dina in the Classroom* and *Small Group Dina* Programmes have helped…	**Agree Strongly**	**Agree**	**Don't Know**	**Disagree**	**Disagree Strongly**
Children learn anger-management and self-control skills					
Children learn the behaviours necessary to be friendly (such as helping, sharing, and teamwork behaviours					
Children learn effective communication skills for talking to other children (such as telling, listening, asking, supporting, speaking-up, praising, and apologising)					
Children learn effective school behaviours (such as listening, waiting, concentrating, and cooperating					
Children learn group skills (including active participation, cooperation, leadership, and group decision-making					
Children develop self-esteem and self-confidence					
Promote social competence and peer acceptance in children (through development of problem-solving and communication skills)					
Enhance peer relationships among the participating children					
Reduce conduct problems and peer rejection among the participating children					
Foster increased self-esteem among the participating children					
Prevent long-term negative consequences of social skill deficits and conduct problems among the participating children					

➡ **5.5** **If you <u>participated</u> in a Teacher Classroom Management Programme, please complete this section.**
If you did not participate in a Teacher Classroom Management Programme, you have now finished completing this questionnaire.

Teacher Classroom Management Programme					
In my opinion, the *Teacher Programme* has helped…	**Agree Strongly**	**Agree**	**Don't Know**	**Disagree**	**Disagree Strongly**
Increase my use of praise and positive feedback to students					
Decrease my use of criticism and unnecessary commands					
Improve my limit-setting skills					
Improve my problem-solving skills					
Improve my anger-management with students					
Increase my support networks					
Increase my positive involvement with parents					
Promote my proactive teaching strategies (in regard to social, emotional and academic competence					
Increase children's social skills					
Increase children's emotional skills					
Increase children's academic skills					
Increase children's problem-solving skills and effective anger-management strategies					
Increase children's positive peer interactions and friendships					
Decrease children's negative attributions					
Increase children's empathy skills					
Decrease children's aggressive oppositional behaviour, and related conduct problems					

Thank you for completing this questionnaire!

All information supplied on this questionnaire will be treated in the strictest confidence. It will only be used for the purposes of the evaluation and will not be shared with any other third party not directly connected to the evaluation.

Appendix G: Participant Demographic Form

Section A – Parent Details

Programme: *Please tick all programmes that you are participating in*

Programme Type		Programme Delivery Location	Participant Code *(to be inserted by Group Leader)*
Basic Parent Training Programme	☐		
Infant & Parent Training Programme	☐		
Toddler & Infant Training Programme	☐		

1. Gender: Female ☐ Male: ☐

2. Age Group: (*Please tick one*)

17 years or under	☐	45 – 64 years	☐
18 – 24 years	☐	65 + years	☐
25 – 44 years	☐		

3. Where do you live? (*Please tick one*)

Moyross	☐	Southill	☐
Ballynanty	☐	Prospect	☐
Killeely/Thomandgate	☐	Ballinacurra Weston	☐
St. Mary's Park/King's Island	☐	Rosbrien	☐
Janesboro	☐	Other	☐
Garryowen	☐	*If other, please state*	

_____

4. Marital Status (*Please tick one*)

Single, never married	☐	Living together as if married	☐
Separated	☐	Widowed	☐
Divorced	☐	Married	☐

If other, please state _____

5. How many children do you have? _____

6. Are you a member of… *(Please tick all that apply)*

The Travelling Community ☐

An immigrant community ☐

8. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

No formal education / Primary school	☐	Leaving Certificate	☐
Some secondary school	☐	Post Leaving Certificate qualification/Third Level	☐

If other, please state _____

9. What is your current employment status? (*Please tick one*)

At Work - full time	☐	Looking for first job	☐
At Work - part time	☐	Unemployed	☐
Student – full time	☐	Engaged in home duties	☐
Student – part time	☐	Retired	☐
Working and studying	☐	Unable to work due to illness/disability	☐

If other, please state _____

10. What is the current employment status of your spouse/partner? *(Please skip to the next question if not applicable)*

At Work - full time	☐	Looking for first job	☐
At Work - part time	☐	Unemployed	☐
Student – full time	☐	Engaged in home duties	☐
Student – part time	☐	Retired	☐
Working and studying	☐	Unable to work due to illness/disability	☐

If other, please state _____

11. Do you have a child (or children) currently participating in an Incredible Years Programme?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If you answered Yes, please complete <u>Section B</u> in respect of your child.

If you have more than one child currently participating in an Incredible Years Programme, please complete a separate Section B page for each child. Please ask your Group Leader for extra forms if required.

If you do not have a child currently participating in an Incredible Years Programme, you do <u>not</u> need to complete Section B.

<u>Section B – Child Details</u>　　　　<u>Child 1</u>

Programme: *Please tick all programmes that your child is participating in.*

Programme Type		Programme Delivery Location	Participant Code *(to be inserted by Group Leader)*
Child Small Group Dina Programme	☐		
Dina in the Classroom Programme	☐		

1. **Gender of Child: Female** ☐ **Male** ☐

2. **Age of Child:** _____ years

3. **Where does the child go to school?**

   _____

4. **Do you have a child with any of the following:** *(Please tick all that apply)*

	Yes	No
Language delay	❐	❐
Learning delay	❐	❐
Physical disability	❐	❐
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	❐	❐
Vision or Hearing Impairment	❐	❐
Specific Learning Difficulty (e.g. Dyslexia)	❐	❐
Emotional or Behavioural problem	❐	❐
Other (*please state*)_____	❐	❐

5. **Is your child attending any of the following professional services for these difficulties?** *(Please tick all that apply)*

	Yes	No
HSE Clinical Psychology	❐	❐
Child and Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	❐	❐
NEPS	❐	❐
Speech and Language	❐	❐
CDC (Child Development Centre)	❐	❐
Enable Ireland	❐	❐
Early Intervention Services	❐	❐
Voluntary Agency (Barnardos etc.)	❐	❐
Social Work Department (HSE)	❐	❐
Other (*please state*)_____	❐	❐

Section B – Child Details   Child 2

(to be completed if applicable)

Programme: *Please tick all programmes that your child is participating in.*

Programme Type		Programme Delivery Location	Participant Code *(to be inserted by Group Leader)*
Child Small Group Dina Programme	☐		
Dina in the Classroom Programme	☐		

1. Gender of Child: Female ☐ Male ☐

2. Age of Child: _____ years

3. Where does the child go to school?

_____

4. Do you have a child with any of the following: *(Please tick all that apply)*

	Yes	No
Language delay	☐	☐
Learning delay	☐	☐
Physical disability	☐	☐
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	☐	☐
Vision or Hearing Impairment	☐	☐
Specific Learning Difficulty (e.g. Dyslexia)	☐	☐
Emotional or Behavioural problem	☐	☐
Other (*please state*)_____	☐	☐

6. Is your child attending any of the following professional services for these difficulties? *(Please tick all that apply)*

	Yes	No
HSE Clinical Psychology	☐	☐
Child and Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	☐	☐
NEPS	☐	☐
Speech and Language	☐	☐
CDC (Child Development Centre)	☐	☐
Enable Ireland	☐	☐
Early Intervention Services	☐	☐
Voluntary Agency (Barnardos etc.)	☐	☐
Social Work Department (HSE)	☐	☐
Other (*please state*)_____	☐	☐

The following appendices are contained on the next number of pages:

Appendix H: Parents' Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

Appendix I: Teachers' Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

Appendix J: Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Questionnaire

Incredible Years Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

Pre-Delivery *Parent Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire*
Date: _____

SECTION 1: PARTICIPANT CODE (*TO BE COMPLETED BY THE GROUP LEADER*)

Geographic Area	Code	Insert √ in relevant box
St. Munchin's	StMu	
Southill	SH	
St. Mary's	StMa	
Moyross	Moy	
Our Lady of Lourdes	OLOL	
Our Lady Queen of Peace	QOP	
Limerick City	LC	

Programme Delivery Location	Code	Insert √ in relevant box
National School	NS	
Junior School	JS	
Girl's National School	GNS	
Boy's National School	BNS	
St. Lelia's Girls National School	SLGNS	
Gaelscoil Sheoirse Clancy	GSC	
Corpus Christi National School	CCNS	
Family Resource Centre	FRC	
Social Services Centre	SSC	
Barnardos	BAR	

Programme Type	Code	Insert √ in relevant box
Basic Parent Programme	BPP	
Small Group Dina Programme	SGD	
Dina in the Classroom Programme	DIC	
Teacher Classroom Management Programme	TCM	
School Readiness Programme	SRP	
Infant & Parent Programme	IPP	
Toddler Parent Programme	TPP	

Participant Type	Code	Insert √ in relevant box
Parent	P	
Child	C	
Teacher	T	

Participant I.D (insert all relevant codes)				
Area	Location	Programme Type	Participant Type	Participant Number
		BPP		
		SGD—PSDQ		
		SGD—TSDQ		
		DIC—TSDQ		

SECTION 2: PARTICIPANT DETAILS *(TO BE COMPLETED BY THE PARENT/GUARDIAN)*

Completed by: Mother _____ Father _____ Other _____ (if other, please state relationship) _____

Gender of Child: Female _____ Male _____

Age of Child: _____ years

Programme: *Please tick all the Incredible Years programmes that your or your child are currently participating or have recently participated in:*

Parent Programmes	Insert √ in relevant box	Child Programmes	Insert √ in relevant box
Basic Parent Programme		Small Group Dina Programme	
Infant & Parent Training Programme		Dina in the Classroom Programme	
Toddler Parent Training Programme			
School Readiness Programme			

SECTION 3: STRENGTHS AND DIFFICULTIES (TO BE COMPLETED BY THE PARENT/GUARDIAN)

For each item, please tick the relevant column, to the best of your knowledge. Please give your answers on the basis of your child's behaviour over the last six months.

		Not True	Somewhat True	Certainly True
1	Considerate of other people's feelings			
2	Restless, overactive, cannot stay still for long			
3	Often complains of headaches, stomach aches or sickness			
4	Shares readily with other children (treats, toys, pencils etc)			
5	Often has temper tantrums or hot tempers			
6	Rather solitary, tends to play alone			
7	Generally obedient, usually does what adults request			
8	Many worries, often seems worried			
9	Helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill			
10	Constantly fidgeting or squirming			
11	Has at least one good friend			
12	Often fights with other children or bullies them			
13	Often unhappy, down-hearted, or tearful			
14	Generally liked by other children			
15	Easily distracted, concentration wanders			
16	Nervous or clingy in new situations, easily loses confidence			
17	Kinder to younger children			
18	Often lies or cheats			
19	Picked on or bullied by other children			
20	Often volunteers to help others (parents, teachers, other children)			
21	Thinks things out before acting			
22	Steals from home, school or elsewhere			
23	Gets on better with adults than with other children			
24	Many fears, easily scared			
25	Sees tasks through to the other end, good attention span			

Overall, do you think that your child has difficulties in one or more of the following areas: emotions, concentration, behaviour, being able to get on with other people?

No	Yes – Minor Difficulties	Yes – Definite Difficulties	Yes – Severe Difficulties

If you have ticked any of the 'yes' boxes above, please answer the following questions about these difficulties:

How long have these difficulties been present?	Less than a month	1-5 months	6-12 months	Over a year
Do the difficulties upset or distress your child?	Not at all	Only a little	Quite a lot	A great deal

Do the difficulties interfere with your child's everyday life in the following areas?

	Not at all	Only a little	Quite a lot	A great deal
Home life				
Friendships				
Classroom learning				
Leisure activities				

Do the difficulties put a burden on you or the family as a whole?

Not at all	Only a little	Quite a lot	A great deal

Thank you for taking the time to complete this Questionnaire.

If you have any questions in relation to any element of this questionnaire or the Incredible Years Evaluation, please contact:

Helen Fitzgerald
PAUL Partnership
Tait Business Centre
Dominic Street
Limerick
Tel: 061 419388
Email: hfitzgerald@paulpartnership.ie

Incredible Years Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

> ***Dina in the Classroom — Teacher Completed SDQ***
>
> ***This Questionnaire is to be completed by the Group Leader (Classroom Teacher) in respect of <u>each child</u> participating in the IY Dina in the Classroom Programme.***

SECTION 1: PARTICIPANT CODE

Geographic Area	Code	Insert √ in relevant box
St. Munchin's	StMu	
Southill	SH	
St. Mary's	StMa	
Moyross	Moy	
Our Lady of Lourdes	OLOL	
Our Lady Queen of Peace	QOP	
Limerick City	LC	

Programme Delivery Location	Code	Insert √ in relevant box
National School	NS	
Junior School	JS	
Girl's National School	GNS	
Boy's National School	BNS	
St. Lelia's Girls National School	SLGNS	
Gaelscoil Sheoirse Clancy	GSC	
Corpus Christi National School	CCNS	
Family Resource Centre	FRC	
Social Services Centre	SSC	

Programme Type	Code	Insert √ in relevant box
Basic Parent Programme	BPP	
Small Group Dina Programme	SGD	
Dina in the Classroom Programme 1	DIC	
Teacher Classroom Management Programme	TCM	
School Readiness Programme	SRP	
Infant & Parent Programme	IPP	
Toddler Parent Programme	TPP	

Participant Type	Code	Insert √ in relevant box
Parent	P	
Child	C	
Teacher	T	

Participant I.D				
Area	Location	Programme Type	Participant Type	Participant Number

---

1 Also known as Classroom Group Prevention Programme

SECTION 2: PARTICIPANT DETAILS

Gender of Child: Female ☐　　Male ☐

Age of Child: _____ years

Is there an IY Child Behaviour Plan for the child?　Yes ☐　　No ☐

Programme: *Please tick all other Incredible Years programmes that the child and his/her parent is currently participating or has recently participated in, that you are aware of:*

Parent Programmes	Insert √ in relevant box	Child Programmes	Insert √ in relevant box
Basic Parent Training Programme		Small Group Dina Programme	
Infant & Parent Training Programme			
Toddler Parent Training Programme			
School Readiness Programme			

Has your school participated in an IY Whole-School Teacher Classroom Management Programme?
Yes ☐　　No ☐

Have you participated in an IY Whole-School Teacher Classroom Management Programme?
Yes ☐　　No ☐

SECTION 3: STRENGTHS AND DIFFICULTIES

For each item, please tick the relevant column, to the best of your knowledge. Please give your answers on the basis of the child's behaviour over the last six months.

		Not True	Somewhat True	Certainly True
1	Considerate of other people's feelings			
2	Restless, overactive, cannot stay still for long			
3	Often complains of headaches, stomach aches or sickness			
4	Shares readily with other children (treats, toys, pencils etc)			
5	Often has temper tantrums or hot tempers			
6	Rather solitary, tends to play alone			
7	Generally obedient, usually does what adults request			
8	Many worries, often seems worried			
9	Helpful if someone is hurt, upset or feeling ill			
10	Constantly fidgeting or squirming			
11	Has at least one good friend			
12	Often fights with other children or bullies them			
13	Often unhappy, down-hearted, or tearful			
14	Generally liked by other children			
15	Easily distracted, concentration wanders			
16	Nervous or clingy in new situations, easily loses confidence			
17	Kinder to younger children			
18	Often lies or cheats			
19	Picked on or bullied by other children			
20	Often volunteers to help others (parents, teachers, other children)			
21	Thinks things out before acting			
22	Steals from home, school or elsewhere			
23	Gets on better with adults than with other children			
24	Many fears, easily scared			
25	Sees tasks through to the other end, good attention span			

Overall, do you think that this child has difficulties in one or more of the following areas: emotions, concentration, behaviour, being able to get on with other people?

No	Yes – Minor Difficulties	Yes – Definite Difficulties	Yes – Severe Difficulties

If you have ticked any of the 'yes' boxes above, please answer the following questions about these difficulties:

How long have these difficulties been present?	Less than a month	1-5 months	6-12 months	Over a year
Do the difficulties upset or distress the child?	Not at all	Only a little	Quite a lot	A great deal

Do the difficulties interfere with the child's everyday life in the following areas?

	Not at all	Only a little	Quite a lot	A great deal
Peer relationships				
Classroom learning				

Do the difficulties put a burden on you or the class as a whole?

Not at all	Only a little	Quite a lot	A great deal

Thank you for taking the time to complete this Questionnaire.
Please make a copy of the questionnaire, and retain for collection by the IY staff
Please store the original questionnaire in a secure location.

If you have any questions in relation to any element of this questionnaire or the Incredible Years Evaluation, please contact:

Helen Fitzgerald
PAUL Partnership
Tait Business Centre
Dominic Street
Limerick
Tel: 061 419388
Email: hfitzgerald@paulpartnership.ie

Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale[1] (long form)

Teacher Beliefs	How much can you do?								
Directions: This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the kinds of things that create difficulties for teachers in their school activities. Please indicate your opinion about each of the statements below. Your answers are confidential.	Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite A Bit		A Great Deal
1. How much can you do to get through to the most difficult students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
2. How much can you do to help your students think critically?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
3. How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
4. How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in school work?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
5. To what extent can you make your expectations clear about student behavior?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
6. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in school work?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
7. How well can you respond to difficult questions from your students ?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
8. How well can you establish routines to keep activities running smoothly?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
9. How much can you do to help your students value learning?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
10. How much can you gauge student comprehension of what you have taught?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
11. To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
12. How much can you do to foster student creativity?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
13. How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
14. How much can you do to improve the understanding of a student who is failing?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
15. How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
16. How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
17. How much can you do to adjust your lessons to the proper level for individual students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
18. How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
19. How well can you keep a few problem students form ruining an entire lesson?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
20. To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
21. How well can you respond to defiant students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
22. How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
23. How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
24. How well can you provide appropriate challenges for very capable students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)

Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale[1] (short form)

Teacher Beliefs	How much can you do?								
Directions: This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the kinds of things that create difficulties for teachers in their school activities. Please indicate your opinion about each of the statements below. Your answers are confidential.	Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite A Bit		A Great Deal
1. How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
2. How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in school work?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
3. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in school work?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
4. How much can you do to help your students value learning?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
5. To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
6. How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
7. How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
8. How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
9. How much can you use a variety of assessment strategies?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
10. To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
11. How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
12. How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom?	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)

Directions for Scoring the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale[1]

Developers: Megan Tschannen-Moran, College of William and Mary
!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!Anita Woolfolk Hoy, the Ohio State University.
!

Construct Validity

For information the construct validity of the Teachers' Sense of Teacher efficacy Scale, see:

> Tschannen-Moran, M., & Woolfolk Hoy, A. (2001). Teacher efficacy: Capturing and elusive construct. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 17,* 783-805.

Factor Analysis

It is important to conduct a factor analysis to determine how your participants respond to the questions. We have consistently found three moderately correlated factors: *Efficacy in Student Engagement, Efficacy in Instructional Practices*, and *Efficacy in Classroom Management*, but at times the make up of the scales varies slightly. With preservice teachers we recommend that the full 24-item scale (or 12-item short form) be used, because the factor structure often is less distinct for these respondents.

Subscale Scores

To determine the *Efficacy in Student Engagement, Efficacy in Instructional Practices*, and *Efficacy in Classroom Management* subscale scores, we compute unweighted means of the items that load on each factor. Generally these groupings are:

Long Form
Efficacy in Student Engagement: Items   1, 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 14, 22
Efficacy in Instructional Strategies: Items   7, 10, 11, 17, 18, 20, 23, 24
Efficacy in Classroom Management: Items   3, 5, 8, 13, 15, 16, 19, 21

Short Form
Efficacy in Student Engagement: Items   2, 3, 4, 11
Efficacy in Instructional Strategies: Items   5, 9, 10, 12
Efficacy in Classroom Management: Items   1, 6, 7, 8

Reliabilities

In Tschannen-Moran, M., & Woolfolk Hoy, A. (2001). Teacher efficacy: Capturing and elusive construct. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 17,* 783-805, the following were found**:**

	Long Form			Short Form		
	Mean	SD	alpha	Mean	SD	alpha
OSTES	7.1	.94	.94	7.1	.98	.90
Engagement	7.3	1.1	.87	7.2	1.2	.81
Instruction	7.3	1.1	.91	7.3	1.2	.86
Management	6.7	1.1	.90	6.7	1.2	.86

[1] Because this instrument was developed at the Ohio State University, it is sometimes referred to as the *Ohio State Teacher Efficacy Scale*. We prefer the name, *Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale*.