



Childhood
Development
Initiative

Annual Report 2023

CDI's Vision:

*Every child in Ireland
is thriving, healthy,
happy, and free from
poverty.*



Charity Number
17557

Charities Regulatory
Authority Number
20065577

Company Number
433654

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Reference and Administrative Information

Directors

John Paul Byrne (Attended 3 of 4 meetings)
Mary Corcoran (Resigned on 31 December 2023) (Attended 4 of 4 meetings)
Madeline Mulrennan (Attended 4 of 4 meetings)
Elizabeth Nixon (Attended 3 of 4 meetings)
Catriona Rodgers (Attended 3 of 4 meetings)
Anita Nolan (Attended 3 of 4 meetings)
Aisling O Reilly (Attended 3 of 4 meetings)
Emer Woodfull (Attended 2 of 4 meetings)
Leon Diop (Attended 4 of 4 meetings)
Siobhan Swaine (Attended 2 of 4 meetings)
Frank Fitzpatrick (Resigned on 24 January 2023) (Attended 0 of 0 meetings)
Jeremiah (Jerome) Bernard White (Appointed on 24 April 2023) (Attended 2 of 4 meetings)
Noel Denis McCarthy (Appointed on 8 September 2023) (Attended 1 of 1 meetings)

Company Secretary

Marian Quinn (Resigned on 28 April 2023)
Boby Philip (Appointed on 28 April 2023)

Registered Office and Principal Address

St Mark's House, Cookstown Lane, Fettercairn, Dublin 24. D24 PK6P

Auditors

Woods & Partners, Woods House, Canon Street, Kells, Co Meath

Bankers

Allied Irish Banks PLC, Tallaght, Dublin 24
Bank of Ireland, Priorsgate, Main Road, Tallaght, Dublin 24

Solicitors

Adrian Burke & Associates, 51/52 Fitzwilliam Square, Dublin 2

CDI Mission:

We will improve outcomes for children by delivering quality, integrated, evidence-informed services and workforce development through partnership and innovation.

CDI Values:

We work in partnership with people, taking a strengths-based, family- and child-centred approach focused on children's rights, responding to needs and driving change.

We use evidence, innovation, prevention, and early intervention approaches to underpin our work.

Tallaght is our home, and we prioritise the needs of this community. We are also committed to transparently sharing our learning to inform policy and practice nationally and internationally.

We are respectful, inclusive, collaborative, and relationship-focused and believe in having fun while we work hard.

Chairpersons' Foreword

In 2023, the Childhood Development Initiative (CDI) achieved the highest level possible in an independent inspection process conducted by the Excellence in Quality Association (EIQA). Discussions with the Data Protection Commission during the year also highlighted that CDI's policies and procedures were well advanced and that the processes were deep, which was unexpected in an organisation of its size.

Neither of these conclusions will surprise those of us who work closely with CDI and see first-hand the diligence, attention to detail, and pursuit of excellence that inform the organisations' governance, service delivery, monitoring systems, and approach to interagency collaboration.

This Annual Report details the outputs and outcomes of our work with children and families, primarily in Tallaght and nationally, and our capacity-building strategies through which we share insights and provide training to others working with and interested in children and families. Never content with the status quo, CDI introduced the NOVA Youth Mental Health Programme in 2023, building on several years of research and consultation. We also progressed our understanding of the impact of parental mental illness on children and worked with the HSE and other partners to identify local needs and potential responses. Offering guidance to parents with a child suspected of having additional needs was also prioritised, along

with several developments relating to parent and infant attachment. Our Doodle STEAM Programme was independently evaluated and demonstrated strong outcomes and opportunities for further development. A review of our Powerful Parenting Programme, completed in 2023, provides important direction for the service progressing in the year ahead.

Interagency working is central to every aspect of CDI's work, and we were delighted to strengthen relationships with our partners throughout the year. We are grateful to our many corporate supporters whose funding enables us to be innovative and responsive; to Tusla for our Area Based Childhood (ABC) Programme grant, which supports so much of our work in Tallaght; and also to our statutory and NGO partners whose expertise and insights are so valuable to informing and supporting our engagement with children and families.

Our staff maintained their good humour, work ethic and focus on high-quality services throughout several staffing changes, some funding uncertainties (which were addressed in late 2023) and some significant changes to internal processes. The Board is grateful to all our staff for their efforts and continued dedication to improving outcomes for children and families. There was considerable engagement between Board members and our staff during the year, and this has enabled a deeper understanding of roles, mutual

respect, and recognition of the range of expertise that enables CDI to deliver such a range of evidence-informed services.

I would like to express my deep appreciation to our Board and Committee members, who share their time and wisdom with such generosity, taking seriously their responsibilities to both support and scrutinise. Our Board members fully recognise the need for transparency and rigorous processes, and they have contributed to ensuring these principles underpin our approach through their vigilance, challenge and detailed consideration of compliance requirements.

Additionally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the employees, service providers and community partners, without whom CDI could not achieve its goals. Our CEO, Marian Quinn, works tirelessly and continuously to further the strategic goals of CDI, support the work of the organisation and, most importantly, maintain meaningful and sustainable relationships at all levels. Tallaght is our home, and the support of the local community and stakeholders allows us to work collaboratively for the benefit of all.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the enormous contribution of my predecessor, Professor Mary Corcoran, who chaired the Board of CDI for the last number of years, was previously a Board member, and also served on our Research Advisory Committee. Mary's academic credentials, commitment to

community-based services, and knowledge of national structures made her a valued and respected colleague. We are delighted that she has remained on our Human Resources and Remuneration Committee, ensuring we maintain organisational memory.

I am honoured to have taken on the role of Chair of the CDI Board. I know firsthand the benefits of the services provided in the community to children, families, and those working with them, and I look forward to working with the Executive to provide direction for CDI's next phase.

Catriona Rodgers,
Chair,
CDI Board of Directors



1. GOVERNANCE AND COMPLIANCE

1. Governance and Compliance

1.1 Progress on actions

During 2023, we welcomed several new people to our governance structures, with two new Board members joining and two more identified to join in early 2024. Specifically, the Board progressed a succession plan for the current chair, Prof. Mary P. Corcoran, with plans for the new chair, Catriona Rodgers, to take up the role from January 1st, 2024.

The Business Development and Communications Committees were merged to improve activity alignment, and significant progress was made in aligning our objectives to the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#) and using these as a framework for engagement with external bodies. The expertise of our board and committee members enabled this, along with the approval of our Business Development Strategy.

We achieved the highest possible rating in our annual [Excellence in Quality Association \(EIQA\)](#) inspection, with the inspector noting



CDI has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to high standards and to continuously improving services they provide to their local community. We rarely see the Q Mark principles so well executed – to enter at Level 2 is unusual, and to achieve Level 3 within three years is something that has been achieved by only very few organisations.

CDI remained fully compliant with all regulatory and legislative requirements and again achieved the [Charities Institute of Ireland's 'Triple Lock'](#) certification.

CDI is committed to ensuring that the personal data of our stakeholders and employees is secure and safe. We implemented a roadmap to compliance with Data Protection Legislation resulting in the formulation of various Data Protection supporting policies and procedures. CDI also ensured all CDI staff completed Data Protection training and, on an ongoing basis, implemented activities to raise staff awareness of CDI Data Protection Policies and procedures. CDI engaged with the Data Protection Commission for guidance on our approach and received very positive feedback on the depth and breadth of our understanding and procedures.

An annual performance review was undertaken with the Board in October, with positive feedback on all aspects of communication, decision-making and reporting. It was noted that Board membership should better reflect the community CDI serves, which will be addressed in early 2024.

A Wellbeing Working Group was established in 2023 to ensure ongoing consideration of and actions to promote staff wellbeing. The annual team residential in October included a facilitated session on working together and

agreements on internal communications. Staff were invited to nominate a representative to attend management team meetings to raise issues, provide feedback, and propose developments. This new structure will be monitored in the year ahead.

Staff recruitment and retention was an ongoing challenge across all programme areas and a draw on resources. Efforts will be made to enhance our communications in relation to recruitment and streamline administrative tasks in the new year.

1.2 Challenges and Opportunities

The Board welcomed the Workplace Relations Commission's (WRC) decision to establish a mechanism to benchmark charity salary scales against statutory pay scales. Staff recruitment and retention have been a challenge for CDI in the last year, reflecting similar experiences across the sector. This process is anticipated to support the recruitment and retention of high-calibre staff.

It is also recognised that the initial guidelines provided by funders regarding pay restoration are likely to require significant attention from both the executive and the Board.

Data protection compliance was daunting at the outset of 2023, given the diversity of documentation required and its

interdependence. A detailed implementation plan enabled us to make incremental progress, building on the foundational documents. The tenacity and attention to detail of CDI personnel were critical in this regard.

Plans to progress becoming a trauma-informed organisation were on hold during 2023 due to a change in personnel. This will be revisited in 2024.

1.3 Targets for 2024

CDI will continue to be vigilant in its compliance activities, maintaining its regular review of policies and implementation. A consultation process will commence in quarter three to inform CDI's next Strategic Plan, which is anticipated to be approved by the Board in late 2024.

We will undertake an annual Board performance review in late 2024 and continue to focus on succession planning for both Board and committee members.



2. BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

2. Business Development

2.1 Progress on actions:

2023 was a year of transition for Business Development with the departure of our former manager and the arrival of our new manager, Jonathon Doyle, in July. Jonathon brings 20 years of experience working in the not-for-profit sector, designing and developing interventions for children and young people and working with corporate and philanthropic bodies to see those interventions come to fruition.

2023 also saw significant additions to our Business Development Committee, including amalgamating our Business Development and Communications Committees. The first task of this new committee was to approve our three-year business development strategy, and we are all very excited to see how this plan materialises over the coming years.

CDI benefitted from the support of several philanthropic and corporate partnerships in 2023, which allowed us to continue to meet the varied challenges faced by those we work with. Examples of some of the interventions we were able to carry out thanks to this generosity include the following:

- Thanks to the generous support of the [Children's Rights Alliance](#) and [Enterprise Rent a Car](#), CDI was able to support a number of families during the Summer and Christmas holiday period. Families involved with our services received food

parcels and vouchers for their shopping to ensure they could cope during this difficult period due to significant increases in the cost of living.

- Thanks to the generosity of several supporters, our [NOVA Youth Mental Health Project](#) ran some interventions throughout the year. This included working with nine primary and secondary schools to deliver a programme to support children and families to bounce back from the difficulties they may have encountered during the pandemic and to address any increases in Emotionally Based School Avoidance. Our NOVA coordinator also supported further targeted support to families in need through our Meitheal+.
- CDI were also the recipients of a grant from Leargas for us to work with Malta National Anti-Bullying Service to train their staff in [Restorative Practices](#).

Our consultancy work continued to thrive in 2023, with CDI being awarded some important projects, as follows:

Teen Parent Support Programme

Tusla initiated a review of the national [Teen Parent Support Programme \(TPSP\)](#), which consists of 12 projects, to inform its expansion under the European Social Fund (ESF). The review involved a desk-based analysis of TPSP documents, national policies, and best practices. Consultation with 55 stakeholders

was also conducted, informing findings and recommendations. CDI was commissioned to undertake this work.

While Tusla decided not to publish the report, it is being used to inform internal discussions about expanding the TPSP.

Evaluation of Citywise Education Interventions

This consultancy support will help [Citywise Education](#) evaluate the efficacy of its Fast Track Academy (FTA), Afterschool, Leadership, and STEAM programmes and the positive impact they can have on young people.

CDI has worked with [Rethink Ireland](#), Citywise Education, and other key stakeholders on this important project, and we look forward to publishing our findings in early 2024.

In addition, CDI has now been placed on a panel of expert consultants with [rethink Ireland](#), opening further opportunities to undertake work on a commissioned basis.

2.2 Challenges and opportunities

CDI is conscious of the need to balance its eagerness to stretch itself and utilise the expertise within the team alongside a pragmatism regarding what is feasible and maintaining our commitment to providing high-quality outputs.

Our panel of [Associate Quality Specialists](#) is an invaluable resource for us. They enable CDI to take on additional initiatives with minimal impact on the team.

Developing a new website during 2023 put some promotional activities on hold.

2.3 Targets 2024

We will extend our panel of Associate Quality Specialists in 2024 to ensure that we have the required range of subject matter experts and geographical spread to enable responsiveness.

A contact mapping process will be completed in early 2024 to inform further development of our contacts in the corporate and philanthropic sectors.

We will continue to apply for grants and consultancies that fit with our strategic plan, with a target of 15 applications per annum. We anticipate the success rate will improve year on year.

We will continue to build on strategic relationships to embed best practices and evidence-based approaches further. We have developed strong partnerships with several statutory, voluntary, and philanthropic partners and are always exploring new opportunities and partnerships.



A comprehensive implementation plan will be developed to ensure full implementation of our Business Development Strategy. This includes finalising the alignment of our outcomes to the SDGs and developing relevant materials to support corporate engagement.

Licence agreements will be developed and in place with all organisations delivering CDI programmes.

We would like to thank all our partners who supported our work and innovation throughout 2023.



3. COMMUNICATIONS

3. Communications

3.1 Progress on actions:

The launch of our new website was the culmination of efforts to enhance user experience and accessibility. The revamped platform provides:

- **Visitor-Centric Approach:** Our redesigned website prioritises the user experience to cater to the diverse needs of our professional and parent community.
- **Improved quality:** Users can expect a significant enhancement in content quality and navigation, ensuring seamless access to valuable resources and services.
- **Engaging Content:** Explore engaging content, including podcasts, videos, and testimonials, curated to provide users with invaluable insights and inspiration.
- **Enhanced Accessibility:** Our new website simplifies the user journey, empowering individuals to find relevant information and resources effortlessly.
- **Comprehensive Offerings:** From courses and events to many resources, users can delve into various tailored offerings designed to meet their interests and requirements.
- **Parents Hub:** Introducing our dedicated Parents Hub, featuring age-specific information and invaluable tips designed to support and guide parents in their journey.

In addition to online activity, CDI staff also participated in and presented at a number of key events during 2023. These included:

- Presenting to the intergovernmental oversight group of the newly established [Child and Wellbeing Poverty Unit](#) on our [Over the Fence](#) research and conducting research in disadvantaged communities.
- Presenting our peer research approach to the [Children’s Research Network for Ireland and Northern Ireland](#).
- Contributing to the national budgeting process in 2023 by publishing a pre-budget submission calling for more investment in prevention and early intervention approaches, especially in addressing child poverty and homelessness, supporting children with additional needs and mental health. The pre-budget submission was circulated to all relevant politicians and policymakers.
- Participating in the Maynooth Research Week in October 2023.
- Presenting on Doodle STEAM at SciCom, a conference on science communication, an exciting networking and presentation opportunity.
- Presenting on Parental Engagement and Capacity Building in the Early Years at the National ABC Learning Event in June 2023.
- Presenting on our Powerful Parenting programme at the Prevention and Early Intervention Summit 2023 in Limerick.

Social Media

In 2023, across our four social media platforms, Instagram, X, Facebook and LinkedIn, we gained:

971 new fans & followers
144,867 people saw our posts



We put out 403 Tweets (more than one a day). We had

1,154 Likes
480 retweets

4,314 engagements (4.5% engagement rate (good engagement rate = 1–3%))



(reporting stopped mid-Sept 2023). We put out 180 posts, we had

963 engagements
4,490 video views

Engagement rate 3.83% (good engagement rate = between 1%–5%)



We put out 314 posts, we had

69,614 impressions
647 photo views

2.31% engagements rate (good engagement rate = between 1%–5%)



We put out 159 posts, we had

1,083 engagements
8.36% engagement rate

34,784 impressions
193 shares

3.2 Challenges and Opportunities

In 2023, website development was a major focus and inevitably took time from other communications activities such as content, social media and digital marketing strategies. With the website being live, a marketing strategy will be developed and implemented closely with the Business Development Manager and Programme Support Coordinator.

CDI has commenced using Eventbrite and Mailchimp platforms to maximise exposure.

The new website will give us many more opportunities to grow and connect with our communities.

3.3 Targets for 2024

Communications activities will support the Business Development Manager to achieve targets regarding increased sales of

- Restorative Practice Training
- Quality Implementation and Impact / QSBO training
- Parental Engagement and Relationships (PEAR)
- Chit Chat Summer Course
- Consultancies.

In addition, we will continue to grow audiences across all our platforms including the website.





4. PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

4. Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation

4.1 Progress on actions

In 2023, CDI's commitment to quality Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (P, M&E) practices grew internally and externally. Internally, CDI implemented innovative impact measurement approaches, including a Social Return on Investment (SROI) on the [Doodle Den Programme](#), which provided insights into the programme's social value. Externally, CDI continued to influence P and M&E processes within the Area Based Childhood (ABC) programme and Tusla. Notably, CDI led the operationalisation of the ABC Outcomes Framework, which is intended to measure and report collectively on the impact of the ABC Programme.

a) Independent evaluation and utilisation of internal data

CDI completed an SROI analysis of the Doodle Den programme, which estimated the social value of the programme. SROI is a participatory, innovative approach to understanding the environmental and social value created by organisations and the financial value generated. Through consultations with various stakeholders, including children, parents, and Doodle Den Facilitators, it was established that for every €1.00 invested in Doodle Den, the programme generates between €1.19 and €2.59 in social value. Some of the recommendations from

the SROI study included upscaling the SROI evaluation and applying it to other CDI programmes.

In 2023, CDI piloted the delivery of [Doodle STEAM](#), a programme designed to improve Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Maths (STEAM) learning outcomes for young children in disadvantaged communities. An independent outcomes evaluation of Doodle STEAM was undertaken during 2023 and reported that the programme considerably impacted the attitudes, confidence, and perceived competence of parents/carers to support STEAM activities for children. The evaluation also found that parents frequently engaged in STEAM with their children after the programme.

In 2023, CDI commissioned Trinity College Dublin to undertake an outcomes evaluation of the Meitheal aspect of the Nova Youth Mental Health programme¹. The evaluation specifically focuses on the effectiveness of Meitheal aspect of Nova in supporting children with emotionally based school avoidance back into school, reducing inappropriate referrals to other health and social care services; facilitators and barriers to successful implementation of Meitheal and how to scale up the Meitheal model to address youth mental health. CDI anticipates the evaluation report to be launched in 2024.



In 2023, CDI distributed [Talk to Your Baby Cubes](#) to parents, a colourful conversation cube featuring engaging prompts for parents to talk to their baby, targeting topics related to social-emotional learning. In 2023, CDI began an evaluation of the Talk to Your Baby Cube to assess how it improves parents' engagement in conversations with their baby and parents' knowledge of the socio-emotional development of their baby. As part of the evaluation, CDI conducted a literature review on the science of brain development in infants, the parent/caregiver's role in communication development and attachment, immersion and technoference² and its impact on infant-caregiver relationships and early childhood development. Evaluation of the Talk to Your Baby cube will be completed in 2024

with a report and literature review paper to be published.

CDI gave considerable attention to further developing internal capacity in research, monitoring, and evaluation in 2023. CDI's P, M&E Unit and Programme staff completed Power BI training, equipping the team with skills in using data visualisation to story tell CDI's impact. The training was important in ensuring an understanding of data visualisation and enhancing the dissemination of impact reports. Also to accurately measure the impact of all CDI programmes, data were collected, analysed, and reports compiled for each CDI programme in 2023. Results from the analysis were used to improve CDI's interventions and inform planning and implementation.

¹ See section 5.8 of this report to learn more about NOVA or visit our website here <https://www.cdi.ie/programmes/nova/>

² Technoference is defined as parents' use of technological devices that interferes with or interrupts everyday normal family relations and interactions, including but not limited to face-to-face conversations, mealtimes, and leisurely time together. Mackay, L.J., Komanchuk, J., Hayden, K.A. et al. Impacts of parental technoference on parent-child relationships and child health and developmental outcomes: a scoping review protocol. *Syst Rev* 11, 45 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13643-022-01918-3>

b). Addressing child poverty in Tallaght and beyond

In 2023, CDI followed up on recommendation in its [“Over the Fence: Child Poverty study”](#)³. With additional Tusla funding, CDI engaged a poet to work with children on some of the recommendations from the study. Through a series of workshops, children and young people articulated child poverty concerns, experiences and solutions for the community. The report and poems will be published in early 2024.

c). Quality child and family services, including training and consultancy

Regarding wider influence, Tusla commissioned CDI to lead the operationalisation of the ABC Outcomes Framework in 12 ABC areas across Ireland. CDI recruited a National Research and Data Specialist to work with ABC to align their internal monitoring and evaluation practices to the ABC Outcomes Framework. The work strengthened the 12 areas’ internal monitoring and evaluation processes and supported collecting outcome data using recommended measures. CDI also trained over 50 ABC staff in outcome-based evaluation, data collection and quality. With support from CDI, all the 12 ABC areas can now collectively measure and report the impact of the ABC programme.

To support the implementation of the ABC Outcomes Framework across 2024, CDI successfully applied for a What Works Building Evidence Grant worth €40,000.00. The grant will be used throughout 2024 to build the foundations of an information management system for the ABC Outcomes Framework and to support the 12 areas that collect, input, and analyse outcome data.

In 2023, CDI contributed to the development of the Tusla Outcomes Framework which provides guidance on measuring the impact of Tusla’s work nationally.

4.2 Challenges and Opportunities

The emerging data from the recent national Census will provide CDI with important information on local and national sociodemographics. From the Census data, CDI will extract insights on the local population, thereby informing changes or additions to service delivery and identifying areas and cohorts with the greatest need.

Finding time to effectively disseminate findings from our ongoing monitoring processes is always challenging, as more pressing operational demands tend to distract from these more strategic activities. Plans to take a Masters Intern in late spring 2024 may provide an opportunity to give this greater attention.

In terms of CDI’s work at the national level, CDI coordinates the ABC Outcomes Framework working group. The working group informs and guides the operationalisation of the BC Outcomes Framework and has helped troubleshoot and promote engagement.

4.3 Targets for 2024:

- In 2024, CDI aims to develop an Information Management System for all its work. This will further improve how CDI measures and reports on the impact of its work
- We will continue to progressively strengthen staff capacity, particularly in using data for reporting and planning, development of data collection tools, and data analysis and visualisation
- We aim to widely disseminate the learning and findings from all CDI interventions across different platforms, including conferences, workshops, programme reports, and journal publications.

³ The “Over the Fence”: Child Poverty Study, is available for download from <https://www.cdi.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/CDI-Child-Poverty-Report-min.pdf>



5. SERVICE DELIVERY