HAPPEE

Policy Briefing No. 1

Health **A**lliance for **P**ractice-based **P**rofessional **E**ducation and **E**ngagement



A BRIEFING FOR SENIOR CIVIL SERVANTS & POLICY MAKERS

UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

Comhairle Cathrach & Contae Luimnigh
Limerick City & County Council

St. Gabriel's Foundation

THE CHALLENGE

- In 2022, more than 110,000 children were on waiting lists for therapies and disability services (*Irish Times, Aug 18 2022*)
- In 2023, over 100,000 children are currently waiting for primary care services that are critical to their development, including occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech & language therapy, psychology *(Irish Examiner, 01 Aug 2023)*.
- 44% of children on these waitlists require speech and language therapy *(PQ Sean Sherlock, 1 Aug 2023)*
- These deficits are compounded by limited availability and access to therapeutic services. More than 50% of children with disabilities are not receiving services *(Inclusion Ireland, 2022; Down Syndrome Ireland, 2022)*.

> *The long waitlists for critical health and educational interventions are a 'wicked problem' as extensive national and international research evidences the negative outcomes of lack of early intervention on children's subsequent poor educational outcomes, mental health disorders, unemployment and involvement in the criminal justice system.*
> **(Heritage et al, 2011)**

- There is considerable international evidence of learning loss amongst primary school pupils during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- There are also findings of a widening attainment gap between pupils from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers.
- Numerous reviews in Ireland and elsewhere have noted that younger children, children from marginalized families, and those from lower socio-economic status backgrounds were most negatively affected by COVID-19-related school closures. *(Ireland's National Assessments of Mathematics and English Reading (NAMER) 2021)*

ADDRESSING DISADVANTAGE WITH A JOINED UP APPROACH

Scan here to watch the HAPPEE video

HAPPEE places University of Limerick (UL) students training to be Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists, and Speech and Language therapists in six primary schools in Limerick's regeneration communities. The students are supervised by fully-qualified, experienced clinicians provided by St Gabriel's Foundation and supported in their academic training by the School of Allied Health, UL. Student placements typically last between 8-10 weeks. Over two years, **HAPPEE** will provide 96 new student placements for UL Allied Health Students.

HOW HAPPEE WORKS

The **Health Alliance for Practice-based Professional Education and Engagement (HAPPEE)** brings together pupils and their parents, school teachers and managers, experienced clinical educators and practice tutors, trainee professionals in speech and language, occupational therapy, and physiotherapy - supported by Limerick City and County Council, the University of Limerick and St Gabriel's Foundation - under the guidance of an advisory team comprising clinical, educational and public policy expertise. HAPPEE creates schools-based professional placements for students in allied health professions.

In the words of Professor Philip Nolan, Chair of the Epidemiology Modelling Group, National Public Health Emergency Team; President, Maynooth University, June 2020:

"In order to improve our public services, we must base decisions on information provided by the service user's lived experience; that is, the experience of a health practitioner on the frontline, or the individuals accessing public services"

Experience teaches us that if we are to tackle grand societal challenges effectively, we need to work together. Addressing the 'wicked problem' that the lack of early intervention poses in areas of socio-economic disadvantage requires us to gather the combined experience, evidence and insights from parents, pupils, teachers and clinicians, in order to develop effective, responsive and sustainable changes to current policy and practice.

ONE SCHOOL STORY... LE CHÉILE'S NEEDS ANALYSIS

In 2022, using funding from the Government's What Works programme, Le Chéile school completed a whole of school assessment of pupils' needs.

67% of pupils have at least one additional need.
42% of pupils have 2 or more additional needs.
27% of pupils have multiple additional needs.

- Mild general learning disabilities (MGLD)
- Moderate general learning disabilities
- Severe/profound general learning disabilities
- Speech and language needs
- Autism spectrum disorder (ASD)
- Oppositional defiant disorder (ODD)
- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- Attention deficit disorder (ADD)
- Dyscalculia
- Dysgraphia
- Dyslexia

Other environmental needs in the school include:

- Anxiety
- Behavioural challenges
- Anger and aggression
- Domestic violence
- Trauma
- Bereavement
- Suicide

DELIVERING ON OUR POLICY AMBITIONS



HAPPEE provides for Wellbeing in Primary Schools (NEPS, Dept Health, HSE, 2015) and delivers the Right care, in the Right place, at the Right time (Sláintecare Action Plan 2023), supporting Government missions identified in the Sláintecare Action Plan 2023, the Disability Act 2005, and the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004.

Schools-based placements enable therapy students to learn about the communities in which they will work, offering professional experience of multi-disciplinary, inter-professional and family centred practice (Progressing Disability Services, HSE, 2021).

The evaluation plan for the project deploys a rigorous, professional and evidence-informed approach to provide the evidential base needed to drive 'insights-driven decision making' for the 'continuous improvement of the lives of the public through well-designed policies and efficient and effective services, which are informed by data and policy insights' (Civil Service Renewal 2030 Strategy, 2021: 14).

Using best practice engaged research methodologies, HAPPEE offers a mechanism to gather the insights and opinions of all stakeholders involved, placing research and innovation at the heart of policy recommendations regarding locally identified needs of children and families in areas of socio-economic disadvantage (Impact 2030, DFHERIS, 2022).

Working together for a better future - Limerick's inter-agency approach to addressing socio-economic disadvantage

HAPPEE liaises closely with the Limerick Regeneration Local Strategic Advisory Monitoring Group, which oversees the physical, economic and social regeneration strategies within the regeneration communities of Limerick City. The Education sub-committee has called out HAPPEE as an exemplar for effective collaboration.

"The HAPPEE project is an innovative example of key stakeholders in our community working together to address challenges in our society. It demonstrates an alternative approach to providing essential public services to those most in need."
Joe Delaney, Director of Regeneration, Limerick City and County Council

"The HAPPEE project has the ability to create a multi-disciplinary approach that will benefit all the children in the school. This transformative project will help increase educational outcomes and attainment."
Eoghan O'Byrne, Principal, St. Mary's National School

"Interacting directly with the community deepens students' understanding of the lived experiences of service users and informs their future practice as healthcare professionals. Overall, such placements contribute to the comprehensive education and development of healthcare professionals who are better equipped to address the needs of those communities"
Aileen Wright, School of Allied Health, University of Limerick

"St Gabriel's are delighted to be part of this collaborative initiative with the School of Allied Health, UL, as we truly believe that it will provide better outcomes for children and their families"
Treasa McAuliffe, CEO, St. Gabriel's Foundation

For more HAPPEE info, or to offer your support contact:
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UL Engage is working to bring higher education and communities together to address locally identified needs. We aspire to building partnerships between Higher Education, Government and Communities to address societal challenges together. This document was compiled by Health Alliance for Professional Practice-based Education and Engagement (HAPPEE) Implementation team and Advisory board. We are grateful for input from Limerick Regeneration Education and Learning Sub-Committee members: Suzie Clifford, Joe Delaney, Noel Fox, Melinda Gushwa, Gary O'Brien (Chair), and Tiernan O'Neill.

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