Childonomics
The Eurochild Network

Eurochild
Putting children at the heart of Europe

‘CHILDONOMICS’ - Measuring the long-term social and economic value of investing in children

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Background

Childonomics seeks to build on past work and policy guidance including:

- 2013 EC Recommendation on Investing in Children – Breaking the cycle of disadvantage as part of Social Investment Package
- 2014 Eurochild conference in Bucharest on "Better Public Spending for Better Outcomes for Children & Families"
- 2016 General Comment 19 on public budgeting for the realization of children's rights outlines principles for effective budgeting & the interpretation of Article 4, including that 'sufficient public resources are mobilized, allocated & utilized effectively to fully implement approved legislation, policies, programmes and budgets'

=> Requires robust evidence to reinforce the economic case, especially in challenging political climate of austerity & public budget cuts

Background

James Heckman: Invest in Early Childhood Development: Reduce Deficits, Strengthen the Economy, 2000

"The highest rate of return in early childhood development comes from investing as early as possible, in disadvantaged families. Starting at age three or four is too late. Efforts should focus on the first years for the greatest efficiency and effectiveness. The best investment is in quality early childhood development."

Gosta Esping-Andersen:Investing in Children and Their Life Chances, 2007

- "Parents who have children and invest well in their future create all at once private and collective welfare…If, additionally, we invest too little in our children's skills the outcome is negative both for their life chances and for our future productivity."

Childonomics first set of deliverables

- A conceptual framework offers a way of mapping services and programmes and linking them to expected outcomes for the child, family, community and society - child rights based and economic perspective
- A methodology for appraising the social and economic return on investment of child and family services
- A report on lessons learnt from applying the conceptual framework and methodology in two pilot countries – Romania and Malta

Conceptual Framework

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INVESTMENT

AVAILABLE SERVICES

ACCESSED SERVICES

Universal services
Services available to all regardless of income levels or other characteristics: birth registration; access to basic health, education & social welfare services; early childhood development; family strengthening such as pre-natal and post-natal parenting courses, home visits, family centres.

Targeted services
Those targeting groups with specific characteristics such as low income; minority group, civil status (e.g. single parent), age (e.g. teenage parent); geographic area (e.g. deprived community or neighbourhood); social assistance & conditional cash transfers; helping parents re-enter the job market – training or employment services, parenting programmes.

Specialised services
Those services requiring specialised personnel usually through referrals. Services that help particular population groups access universal services such as Special Educational Needs services or teaching assistants; disability services including community-based rehabilitation, respite services and day care; kinship care; occupational-, physio-, speech and language therapies; support for independent living (e.g. individual budgets).

Highly specialised services
Highly-specialised services include at least an initial social work assessment so the intervention targets specific issues. It may address social issues faced by the family, or community-based crisis intervention; drug and alcohol programmes; violence and abuse prevention programmes; therapeutic family therapies including multi-systemic therapy or functional family therapy; child protection interventions aimed at preventing harm to children and preventing them from entering formal care, rehabilitation and reintegration services for children in connection with the law or victims of trauma.

Alternative care services
Services caring for children outside the home of the immediate biological family, usually following a court order to protect the safety and well-being of the child. They include: emergency foster care; long-term foster care; family-type residential care; reintegration services; supported independent living services for young adults transitioning out of care services.

IMPACT

OUTCOMES

Child
Improved cognition, education, health and improved well-being, employment/ livelihoods in adulthood

Parents/family
Strengthened families; competent parents and carers able to meet the individual needs of children; parents and carers taking better decisions in relation to their children's developmental needs

Community
Lower rates of juvenile offending; fewer children requiring alternative care; more young people in education, employment or training

Society
Reduced inter-generational poverty

Indicators (national, community level and disaggregated for users of specific services/programmes): poverty rate; NEET rate (disaggregated for care setting, different types of disability, gender and other exclusion factors); rate of children in different types of out of home care; rate of early and unwanted pregnancies (disaggregated); juveniles offending rate (disaggregated); education achievment (scores/cognition levels - disaggregated); rate of children in bonded or domestic labour; rate of abuse/violence neglect of children; child mortality rate by age and cause (disaggregated)

- Assessment/triage/gatekeeping/referral
- Border for alternative care services
- Children living with their parents and families in the community
- Children living apart from parents/family

Main policy take-aways from Childonomics

1: Child and family policies are too important to be politicised!

2: Be clear on expected outcomes & put in place effective monitoring & evaluation mechanisms

3: Data is all important – use what's available better, fill in the gaps, disaggregate

4: Economic modelling is both possible & necessary

5: Children do not grow up in silos! Important to look at inter-section between policy areas & how they reinforce positive outcomes for children

Thank you for your attention!

Further information:

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