

Evaluation of the Learning Community in the National Early Years Access Initiative

Technical Report
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Kieran McKeown
Social & Economic Research Consultant
www.kieranmckeown.ie

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Promoting Better Outcomes for Children & Families

The National Early Years Access Initiative 2010-2014

The National Early Years Access Initiative (NEYAI) is a collaboration between a number of funding partners namely, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs(DCYA), the Department of Education and Skills (DES), the Mount Street Club Trust, The Atlantic Philanthropies and the Board of Pobal.

síolta

The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education

Síolta Quality Assurance Programme (2009-2013)

The Síolta QAP was developed to allow Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) settings to engage formally with the Síolta Quality Framework.

Table of Contents

Part A – Data Coverage.....	6
Part B – Inputs to Learning Community.....	7
1 Meetings of Learning Community	7
Part B – Processes of Learning Community	13
2 Group Cohesion	13
3 The Balance of Process and Task	16
4 Group Identity in the Learning Community	18
5 Group Learning Skills	21
Part C – Outcomes of Learning Community	25
6 Influence of Learning Community on Thinking and Actions.....	25
7 Influence of Learning Community on Outcomes.....	31
8 Concluding Comments	37

List of Tables

Part A - Data Coverage.....	6
Table 1: Summary of Responses to Monitoring Instrument.....	6
Table 2: Summary of Responses to Evaluation Questionnaire	6
Part B – Inputs to Learning Community.....	7
1 Meetings of Learning Community	7
Table 3.1: Please give your assessment of meetings of the Learning Community? End-point	7
Table 3.2: Please give your assessment of meetings of the Learning Community? Mid-point	7
Table 4: Please give your assessment of whether the number of meetings of the Learning Community has been too few, too many or about right?	7
Table 5: Please give your assessment of whether the length of meetings of the Learning Community has been too long, too short or about right?	8
Table 6: Please give your assessment of whether overall attendance at meetings of the Learning Community has been poor, excellent or average?	9
Table 7: Please give your assessment of whether the consistency of attendance at meetings of the Learning Community has been poor, excellent or average?	10
Table 8: Please give your assessment of the physical environment of the meeting room?	10
Table 9: Please give your assessment of how meetings of the Learning Community have been facilitated?	11
Table 10: Please give your assessment of back-up support for meetings of the Learning Community?	12
Part B – Processes of Learning Community	13
2 Group Characteristics	13
Table 11.1: Please give your assessment of group characteristics in the Learning Community? End-point.....	13
Table 11.2: Please give your assessment of group characteristics in the Learning Community? Mid-point	13
Table 12: How would you describe the overall feeling within the group during meetings of the Learning Community?	13
Table 13: Did you feel it was safe to say what you thought or felt at meetings of the Learning Community?	14
Table 14: Did you experience the group as a supportive environment for learning?	15
Table 15: Did you enjoy meetings of the Learning Community?.....	15
3 The Balance of Process and Task.....	16
Table 16.1: How well did the Learning Community maintain a focus at each meeting on the ‘process’ and the ‘task’? End-point.....	16

Table 16.2: How well did the Learning Community maintain a focus at each meeting on the 'process' and the 'task'? Mid-point.....	16
Table 17: How well did the Learning Community maintain a focus at each meeting on the 'process' and the 'task'?.....	17
4 Identity of Group as a Learning Community	18
Table 18.1: Please give your assessment of group identify in the Learning Community? End-Point.....	18
Table 18.2: Please give your assessment of group identify in the Learning Community? Mid-point	18
Table 19: How strong was the bond holding the Learning Community together?.....	18
Table 20: Do you think the Learning Community saw itself and its work as 'necessary and urgent' or 'optional and not urgent'?	19
Table 21: Would you say there was a strong desire within the group to succeed as a Learning Community?....	20
5 Group Learning Skills.....	21
Table 22.1: Please give your assessment of group learning skills in the Learning Community? End-Point	21
Table 22.2: Please give your assessment of group learning skills in the Learning Community? Mid-Point	22
Table 23: How attentively did people listen to each other in the Learning Community?	22
Table 24: Did the quality of interactions in the Learning Community create a space for 'sustained shared thinking'?	23
Table 25: How would you characterise the quality of dialogue in the Learning Community in terms of how people used 'open-and-exploratory statements' or 'closed-and-declaratory statements'?	23
Table 26: Which aspect of learning was given greater emphasis in the Learning Community: 'objective learning' or 'subjective learning'?	24
Part C – Outcomes of Learning Community	25
6 Influence of Learning Community on Thinking and Actions.....	25
Table 27.1: How much has this meeting of the Learning Community influenced your thinking or actions about ways of improving outcomes for children?	25
Table 27.2: How much has this meeting of the Learning Community influenced your thinking or actions about ways of improving outcomes for parents?	25
Table 27.3: How much has this meeting of Learning Community influenced your thinking or actions about ways of improving outcomes for staff?	26
Table 27.4: How much has this meeting of the Learning Community influenced your thinking or actions about ways of improving the early years sector?	26
Table 27.5: How much has this meeting of the Learning Community influenced your thinking or actions about ways of improving any other aspect of your work?	27

Table 28.1: Influence of other NEYAI projects on thinking or likely future actions.....	27
Table 28.2: Influence of invited speakers on thinking or likely future actions	28
Table 28.3: Influence of Pobal on thinking or likely future actions	28
Table 28.4: Influence of facilitator on thinking or likely future actions.....	28
Table 28.5: Influence of evaluation team on thinking or likely future actions	29
Table 29: Number of contacts with other NEYAI projects since the last meeting of the Learning Community ...	29
Table 30.1: Number of events (such as conferences, seminars or training workshops) attended since last meeting.....	30
Table 30.2: Did these events influence your thinking or actions about any aspect of your work?	30
7 Influence of Learning Community on Outcomes.....	31
Table 31.1: Please give your assessment of outcomes of the Learning Community? End-Point	31
Table 31.2: Please give your assessment of outcomes of the Learning Community? Mid-Point.....	32
Table 32: Have there been any individual-level outcomes for you as a person as a result of attending the Learning Community?.....	32
Table 33: Have there been any outcomes for your NEYAI project as a result of attending the Learning Community?	33
Table 34: Have there been any outcomes for the NEYAI initiative as a result of attending the Learning Community?	34
Table 35: Have there been any outcomes for the early years sector as a result of attending the Learning Community?	35
Table 36: Overall, do you think the outcomes of the Learning Community have been worth the time and effort spent on this aspect of NEYAI?	36
8 Concluding Comments	37
Table 37: Do you have any other comments about the Learning Community?	37

Part A - Data Coverage

Table 1: Summary of Responses to Monitoring Instrument

ID	Date of Meeting										Total
	9-11	11-11	2-12	6-12	10-12	2-13	6-13	10-13	2-14	4-14	
BC		0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	7
CC		1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	5
CK		1	1	1	0	3	2	2	1	0	11
CN		3	1	2	1	1	0	1	1	0	10
DD		2	2	2	2	1	2	0	1	1	13
DL		2	2	3	3	1	0	2	1	1	15
FL		1	2	0	0	2	2	2	0	0	9
LD		1	1	2	0	1	2	0	1	1	9
LK		1	2	2	2	1	2	1	0	0	11
RO		0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	4
TT		1	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	6
Total		13	12	15	10	14	12	11	6	7	100

Table 2: Summary of Responses to Evaluation Questionnaire

	Mid-Point Assessment At 12-12	End-Point Assessment At 4-14
BC	1	1
CC	0	1
CK	4	2
CN	3	3
DD	2	2
DL	0	2
FL	3	0
LD	1	2
LK	2	2
RO	0	2
TT	0	2
Other*	3	2
Total	19	21

**Other refers to Pobal staff. For the mid-point assessment, it also includes the Facilitator. Does not include Evaluation Team as not a member of LC but is 'in attendance'.*

Part B – Inputs to Learning Community

1 Meetings of Learning Community

Table 3.1: Please give your assessment of meetings of the Learning Community? End-point

Question	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
1.1 number of meetings	2	3	3.0	3
1.2 length of meetings	1	4	2.6	3
1.3 attendance at meetings	3	5	3.8	4
1.4 consistency of attendance	3	4	3.4	3
1.5 meeting room	2	5	3.6	4
1.6 facilitation of meetings	3	5	4.1	4
1.7 back-up support for meetings	3	5	4.2	4

Notes: Based on Evaluation Questionnaire. Summary of Answers to Q1.1-1.7 at end-point assessment. 1=too little; 3=about right; 5=too much

Table 3.2: Please give your assessment of meetings of the Learning Community? Mid-point

Question	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
1.1 number of meetings	1	4	2.7	3
1.2 length of meetings	2	5	2.9	3
1.3 attendance at meetings	2	5	3.5	3.5
1.4 consistency of attendance	1	4	2.7	3
1.5 meeting room	1	4	3.1	3
1.6 facilitation of meetings	2	5	4.1	4
1.7 back-up support for meetings	3	5	3.9	4

Notes: Based on Evaluation Questionnaire. Summary of Answers to Q1.1-1.7 at mid-point assessment. 1=too little; 3=about right; 5=too much

Table 4: Please give your assessment of whether the number of meetings of the Learning Community has been too few, too many or about right?

Question	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
1.1 number of meetings	2	3	3	3
Text				
I think meeting 3 to 4 times per year was about right. Some meetings were more useful than others but it was always good to discuss issues/progress/challenges etc with the other projects				
Enough meetings to engage with other projects but not too many as to be a burden on service provision.				
Time is scarce and wouldn't have liked to have had more meetings. Always enjoyed the LC meetings.				
In view of the very busy workload of the local Coordinators and the Consortium members, I think the number of meetings was right.				
I felt the timing was good for each meeting as the space between gave opportunity to get a good run with work ideas and solutions discussed at the meetings.				
More meetings would have counteracted the loss of collective momentum that happens in the months in between, but then logistics take priority (e.g. a day in Dublin means two days of catching up back at base).				
I feel that this was what services could commit to which was what was decided as a group at the beginning.				
It was regular enough for maintaining continuity and not too onerous to attend in terms of frequency.				
The number of meetings was set by the 11 projects based on identified need and in line with Initiative milestones such as evaluation (national and local) timelines, dialogue re legacy / sustainability and				

preparations for dissemination / sharing learning.
I would argue on the side of too few/to about right if that makes sense, feel that maybe for continuity and more meetings might have facilitated a greater level of discussion around particular thematic issues but having said that the pressure or project work might have made this difficult.
You don't want meetings about meetings we all have work to do at project level so a few meetings a year was sufficient.
The issue is not the frequency, but the content.
It was good to meet up with other NEAI and hear feedback of the project updates.
It was a good balance between meeting each other and getting the work done in the projects. Anymore would take away from implementation and place too big a demand on the projects.
Adequate – I would have liked to attend more but was unable to.
The learning community seemed to afford the coordinating staff a chance to check in, and share insights with their counterparts in other projects, and so allowed for general feedback and joint working. However, these meetings were a 'light' touch, not necessarily achieving or changing a whole lots in relation to the work on the ground, and so having these meetings more often (in this format) would not have been useful.
I found the number of meetings were just right, at times it was difficult to make every single one due to location however they were informative when able to attend.
Due to travel expenses I was unable to attend all Learning community meetings. However, I think there was a sufficient number of meetings. However, i think there was a sufficient number of meetings scheduled.
My post is part time so while I really appreciated the support and learning, I had to juggle full day attendances with an overloaded schedule.
<i>Notes: Based on Evaluation Questionnaire. Summary of Text Answers to Q1.1-1.7 at end-point assessment.</i>

Table 5: Please give your assessment of whether the length of meetings of the Learning Community has been too long, too short or about right?

Question	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
1.2 length of meetings	1	4	2.6	3
Text				
I think they were about right – but obviously easier for me eth say that as I did not have to travel from outside Dublin				
The 10am to 4pm slot is just right. Could get back to the office if necessary.				
The length of the meetings was determined by the wishes and availability of the members and on pragmatic considerations about workload etc.				
Slightly too long, the meetings can be intensive with lots of discussion and new information so concentration levels can drop in the afternoon.				
Coming to Dublin for the day is justified by the length and agenda of the LC meetings. Also, given that the meetings are quarterly, a full day is appropriate.				
The length of the meetings for one full day was fine.				
The length as a day-long meeting has been fine but sometimes the time could have been used better.				
The first mtg took place over 2 days; this was needed for initial forming / norming etc but the projects decided this was too demanding in terms of time commitments. Sometimes the resultant day long meetings were intense but nonetheless business was completed in the timeframe and in general feedback was positive.				
Agendas where very ambitious (not unusual) and people lost a bit of steam towards the end of the sessions				
Sometimes the opportunity to network was lost with the packed agenda. It would have been good to have one or two longer sessions maybe two days together.				
More could have been achieved by focusing on learning, rather than the inordinate amount of time spent on the National Evaluation and other ancillary issues.				
It was good to hear about the other projects at the beginning and have the opportunity to network at each meeting. Enjoyed having the opportunity to learn from others also and hear about the research.				
I would have preferred if they were shorter but there was a lot to cover.				
Shorter meetings might have facilitated greater attendance particular from own perspective.				

In my experiences at the learning community people often left early, suggesting that the day was too long. Usually this pertained to those who had to travel, however I also noticed that those who worked in Dublin left early to attend other meetings/commitments, suggesting that perhaps these meetings were not a priority.

At times the meetings were a little long however as there were so many groups wanting to discuss their projects this is understandable as to why they may have needed to have been so lengthy.

It was difficult to keep to the scheduled time of the agenda in order for the outcomes to be more productive. However because of the location I lost 2 days of work and the travel expenses and overnight stay made the meetings expensive.

Notes: Based on Evaluation Questionnaire. Summary of Text to Q1.1-1.7 at end-point assessment.

Table 6: Please give your assessment of whether overall attendance at meetings of the Learning Community has been poor, excellent or average?

Question	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
1.3 overall attendance at meetings	3	5	3.8	4
Text				
Attendance was good overall...				
Good turnout in my view. Must be much harder for the projects outside Dublin.				
The overall attendance has been above average and this is reassuring given all the demands on local projects including trying to make applications for new funding programmes. My sense is that projects made a very real effort to be represented at all meetings. In most cases this was possible.				
I attended all the meetings and there was roughly the same number attending the meetings.				
The LC meetings have always been well-attended.				
Overall attendance by 11 projects was average however the changing personnel made cohesiveness difficult.				
Excellent in terms of participation by projects. Most if not all projects seemed to be represented at each meeting. I think people felt it important to attend. However, it was mainly Coordinators or staff members who attended rather than Consortium members who seemed to drop off as the project progressed. On the one hand it was a pity that Consortium members weren't present as they might have been better informed overall, however, it was more important that those directly engaged in the various projects attended to share ideas and learn from one another.				
Attendance was generally high with at least 2 persons from each project and some consortium members attended also. Towards the end and for last few LC mtgs, attendance from some projects began to wane and this probably reflects their own sense of project priorities as it draws to an end / lack of follow up funds.				
Attendance was generally very good and there was good continuity of attendance over time.				
There seemed to always be a representative from each project in attendance.				
Not enough consistency of attendance. Can't build a community without clarity on membership.				
It appeared well above average and I liked the way that consortium members were also welcome.				
All projects appeared to be represented at most of the meetings.				
Personally not always able to make the meetings.				
I attended meetings early in the initiative and they overall attendance was reasonably good at that point.				
I always found attendance to have been quite good and most projects were well represented.				
Of the meetings I attended there appeared to be representation from the majority of groups.				
Some people had very long distances to travel to attend.				

Notes: Based on Evaluation Questionnaire. Summary of Text to Q1.1-1.7 at end-point assessment.

Table 7: Please give your assessment of whether the consistency of attendance at meetings of the Learning Community has been poor, excellent or average?

Question	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
1.4 consistency of attendance at meetings	3	4	3.4	3
Text				
Sometimes the attendees changed a lot – even at the second last meeting in the Aisling Hotel there were new faces and some people who attended in the beginning, did not attend later meetings and we were not told if people had resigned /left etc				
There were a few people who were able to attend consistently. It is hard to keep the same people attending over the course of 3 years.				
In general I've been meeting many of the same people so it was reasonably consistent.				
Based on previous comments, I think there has been consistency of attendance generally speaking. In the latter months people have been involved in the planning group for the conference and this has taken up quite a bit of time, effort and commitment. This representation was on behalf of the L.C.				
I felt that the same people attended.				
Excellent for the regular attendees and poor for those where membership representation alternated, so average overall. The latter was. perhaps, the most significant weakness of the LC.				
Overall attendance by 11 projects was average however the changing personnel made cohesiveness difficult.				
Given staff changes, it was inevitable that consistency would vary. However, overall, there was good continuity of personnel attending.				
Initially, and as might be expected, those attending changed from meeting to meeting but once staff were recruited, the range of personnel attending was fairly consistent with some notable exceptions (2-3 projects) during the past year.				
Consistency was good.				
Not enough consistency of attendance. Can't build a community without clarity on membership.				
I think it was above average with an opportunity to have lots of discussion.				
It may have been poor to begin with as the projects were not quite sure who to send but there appeared to be increased consistency as time went on.				
Provides a valuable opportunity to learn from the other projects and progress along with tracking work of national evaluation.				
Again at the beginning there was good consistency as the initiatives were gaining momentum.				
At times there was a lot of repetition of information.				
I was only able to attend alternate meetings due to travel expense and time.				

Notes: Based on Evaluation Questionnaire. Summary of Text to Q1.1-1.7 at end-point assessment.

Table 8: Please give your assessment of the physical environment of the meeting room?

Question	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
1.5 physical environment of the meeting room (eg. size & suitability of room in terms of layout, comfort, refreshments, etc.)	2	5	3.6	4
Text				
Mostly good – just one meeting when I think we were in a slightly smaller room and it was stiflingly hot. Refreshments were very good at Aisling Hotel - nice salad for lunch				
Noise levels from outside was sometimes a problem. Little daylight in the room.				
Ashling Hotel is great but I resent paying for €14 for parking when we're non-profits. Room is bland but not the end of the world! Lunch has been good.				
This has gotten better over time.				
I was always comfortable and happy with the facilities.				
Food and refreshments were consistently good and the LC was very well looked after. The suite that				

we were assigned, however, is somewhat oppressive in terms of lack of natural light, traffic noise and stuffiness.
Everything was fine.
Good location for those of us travelling by train. However the meeting room itself was small and airless with little natural light - being able to go to break-outs in the 'corridor' compensated somewhat.
On occasions the meeting room was claustrophobic; more recently, with smaller numbers and larger rooms, space seemed excessive; however, on balance, convenience, familiarity of the setting and improvements in hotel services compensated for shortcomings....and possibly encouraged a more 'intimate' atmosphere.
Only draw back limited natural light (nit picking).
Room and refreshments were fine, however the one occasion the food was in the room itself didn't work well in my opinion.
Aishling Hotel is geographically handy. Room environment poor. Kilmainham Suite is a much better room.
Pobal are very skilled at making participants feel very welcome. On one occasion a team member was accompanying me to the LC and she was a coeliac and their attention to detail was excellent.
Larger meeting space usually better for a day long meeting.
The rooms I attended meetings in were comfortable, spacious etc.
Venues were always quite pleasant with ample refreshments.
The room could have been bigger and set up to encourage group networking throughout the day.
<i>Notes: Based on Evaluation Questionnaire. Summary of Text to Q1.1-1.7 at end-point assessment.</i>

Table 9: Please give your assessment of how meetings of the Learning Community have been facilitated?

Question	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
1.6 facilitation of meetings	3	5	4.1	4
Text				
Very good – in particular Jane the independent facilitator was excellent. Sometimes after that the meetings did not stick to the timetable and at times went on and on a bit...				
Facilitation has been quite good. Particularly liked Jane Clarke's facilitation skills in the early days too.				
Sometimes the meeting veered off topic but I think having flexibility is good as the agenda doesn't always suit where the group is at.				
Going from external facilitation to Pobal-led was seamless which is a mark of (a) the good foundations led by the external facilitator and (b) the collective understanding that we had to get the most from each LC meeting.				
Generally well facilitated working through the agenda, though at times items were deferred to a planning group when it may have been more beneficial to do in the group. However reflecting back it feels that we as a learning community never had a clear focus from the outset therefore I feel that the 'learning community' idea needs reviewing in the context of working with consortia. I wonder if access to expertise from outside the 11 projects / Pobal within Ireland and outside Ireland should have been brought before the learning community was established to plan /design the learning community with the members. There has been an untapped opportunity to disseminate learning through the lifetime of the project. All of the projects has consortia, if for example each consortium had 10 organisations involved that is immediately 310 organisations with a link to NEYAI plus the all the other consortia who expressed interest and were told that they would have access to the learning. There is a missed opportunity to bring these partners together for joined up learning. I feel that the learning community became more of an NEYAI support group.				
Time-keeping could have been better. Often a lot of time was wasted early in the day when we could have been 'stuck in' from the word go. This meant that we often did not address the major issues. Both Jane Clarke and Bernie McDonnell are highly skilled facilitators but particularly in the most recent meetings, it was difficult to see achievements.				
The decision to get external facilitation initially proved a good one. It was sensitive and skilled and brought the group together without having to contend with latent or explicit 'antagonism' to Pobal facilitation. Once the group formed and grew stronger, there was less fear that Pobal may want to dominate / control. The subsequent facilitation by NEYAI Programme Manager's was timely, insightful and appropriately performed.				

Having the active facilitation from Pobal was significant in terms of continuity and keeping the show on the road.
Meetings were always facilitated well both with external facilitator and through Pobal. I think initially the external worked well as an impartial voice.
External facilitator did a good job overall, but the external facilitator meant that the projects were not directing the learning. Not that many were looking to take on responsibility in this area.
Excellent with great opportunity for all to be heard.
At the beginning, it was ok – bit wishy-washy but the facilitation improved when Bernie took over and there was a good match between getting work done and allowing people to vent. There was also more consistency around issues etc.
Good agenda and clear process to the days work.
The meetings I attended were well facilitated; good time keeping, agenda was met etc.
Well structured with good opportunity to share information and give feedback.
Generally the facilitation was quite well managed.
Facilitation of meetings was generally good but appeared challenging to keep to the time schedule.

Notes: Based on Evaluation Questionnaire. Summary of Text to Q1.1-1.7 at end-point assessment.

Table 10: Please give your assessment of back-up support for meetings of the Learning Community?

Question	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
1.7 back-up support for meetings	3	5	4.2	4
Text				
Emily is very efficient				
Really strong – great support from Pobal team.				
I wasn't heavily involved in addition to meetings but I always received minutes, agenda etc.				
Emily, Nuala and Bernie did incredible work behind the scenes to ensure that the LC was fully supported.				
Overall this was good. Some of this has been confusing at times. Planning groups have been set up to support the work of the learning community and due to distance /role of personnel who came to the learning community some projects have not always been able to participate. The communication has not always been clear and some decisions have been made on behalf of the 11 groups without consultation. It would have been better if this work had happened within the actual learning community day so that all projects could participate. The portal did not really work in practice.				
All done very efficiently - well done to Emily, Nuala and Siobhan.				
Back up support was excellent.				
Project were poor to agree agenda – administrative support from Pobal was excellent.				
Excellent, very dedicated team to ensure that nothing was forgotten about.				
Emily was fantastic – very organised, always on time, well prepared etc.				
Problems with portal (not accessing all the time as have a number of portal sites already to link in with through day job so haven't been following up on Portal link regularly.				
In my limited experience this was good.				
Always very efficient.				
Meetings regarding setting agenda was difficult to be involved in due to location and travel expenses. However minutes and documents were easy to access on the NEYAI Forum.				
Excellent overall for our project considering we needed a lot of extra (and individualised) support due to the delayed start up, however, we experienced ongoing difficulties logging into the Pobal website where much of the information was housed.				

Notes: Based on Evaluation Questionnaire. Summary of Text to Q1.1-1.7 at end-point assessment.

Part B – Processes of Learning Community

2 Group Cohesion

**Table 11.1: Please give your assessment of group cohesion in the Learning Community?
End-point**

Question	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
2.1 overall feeling within the group	2	5	3.8	4
2.2 feel it is safe to say what you think or feel	2	5	4.1	4
2.3 experience the group as a supportive environment	2	5	3.8	4
2.4 enjoy meetings of the learning community	1	5	3.9	4

Notes: Based on Evaluation Questionnaire. Summary of Answers to Q1.1-1.7 at end-point assessment. 1=negative rating; 3=average rating; 5=positive rating.

**Table 11.2: Please give your assessment of group cohesion in the Learning Community?
Mid-point**

Question	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
2.1 overall feeling within the group	2	5	3.4	3
2.2 feel it is safe to say what you think or feel	1	5	3.5	4
2.3 experience the group as a supportive environment	1	5	3.6	4
2.4 enjoy meetings of the learning community	2	5	3.6	4

Notes: Based on Evaluation Questionnaire. Summary of Answers to Q1.1-1.7 at mid-point assessment. 1=negative rating; 3=average rating; 5=positive rating.

Table 12: How would you describe the overall feeling within the group during meetings of the Learning Community?

Question	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
2.1 overall feeling within the group	2	5	3.8	4
Text				
Mostly positive, but a good place to air issues nonetheless				
Overall very positive and cohesive although as some earlier meetings this was not the case.				
Challenges were real and were discussed constructively. Group dynamic was positive – especially when common experiences were shared.				
It improved over time and in the final meetings were very positive, cooperative even at times enthusiastic. People felt listened to and heard and used the opportunities provided to do some serious networking and mutual learning. However, coming towards the end, there was also a sense of ending, workload challenges, running out of energy, and the attention elsewhere – concerns about the future and one's personal employment circumstances. This did not detract from the work at the LC meetings.				
Most of the time quite positive but it was also a space where colleagues needed to air their frustrations but generally as time went on everyone grew closer and openly shared the good, bad and ugly which I felt was a very important aspect of the meetings.				
Truthfully, it was up and down but I think that we tried our best to stay upbeat. At times we became laden down in the same issues but ultimately, and in particularly towards the end, there was a tangible positivity.				
The learning group were a very welcoming and supportive group. In general however every meeting				

felt almost like a stand-alone workshop with little or no connectivity apart from the project updates/ national evaluation. I am not sure 'learning community' was the right name for this group. NEYAI support group may have been more appropriate as I do not feel it met the aims that it set out in the original proposal which was to be a forum for sharing the learning from each of the projects with each other and other groups including those who had not been successful in the application for NEYAI funding.
Mostly very positive and enthusiastic. Good open discussions. Allowed for various opinions to be expressed.
The overall atmosphere changed over time and occasionally was negative, if contained. However, on balance, even with some negativity, the projects enjoyed meeting and found the experience positive and useful in terms of networking and learning from each other and from expert input, including the national evaluation and external speakers.
Developed a collegiate sense as a learning community over time.
Initial meetings were negative in relation to consortia's and evaluation processes however once they were dealt with the meetings became very positive and acted as a real learning space.
It was mixed. But most of the time the feeling was of frustration, particularly with the Evaluation.
At times there was some negativity regarding the research but this was generally trashed out and explained.
Depended on the meeting and the topic – trust also increased over the 3 years as people got to know each other.
Positive work like approach to business and eagerness to participate.
This really depended on the topic. There was lots of positivity around individual projects. The groups were all individually passionate and enthusiastic about their own work, which led to a great sharing of ideas and feedback. Where challenges and problems had arisen, the learning community was a place where people could express their opinions about this, and share advice and suggestions. However there was negativity about the wider issues in relation to the projects particularly in relation to the evaluation. There was, in my experience, also a feeling of negativity about the wider national purpose of the projects, and a fear that our work was/is having no real impact or is not being disseminated. By the second time I attended there was a distinct feeling that these projects were not really important or a priority to the NEYAI, just the data they produced. However, linked to this was a feeling that the evaluation did not accurately capture the true work of the projects.
Interested initially, some issues were off putting for some groups.
I found everyone quite supportive of one another.
Exchanges were generally positive.

Notes: Based on Evaluation Questionnaire. Summary of Text Answers to Q2.1-2.4 at end-point assessment.

Table 13: Did you feel it was safe to say what you thought or felt at meetings of the Learning Community?

Question	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
2.2 feel it is safe to say what you think or feel	2	5	4.1	4
Text				
Most of the time, yes.				
Yes – very safe. The environment was supportive and receptive to different opinions.				
The more meetings I attended the more comfortable I felt. It was a non-threatening atmosphere.				
The only exception would have been discussions around workloads (where I felt it would have overstepped the mark to query why people felt that certain things weren't their job: 'I don't have time to send e-mails, check the portal' etc).				
Fine.				
Felt very safe to express views and felt listened to. In relation to small issues they were acted upon but felt that views were unfortunately not acted upon in relation to the big issues.				
It had its moments but I think people usually managed to say what they needed to surface.				
Yes I think most people were very open in sharing their own learning.				
At times I felt that what I was saying was being taken as unconstructive. Evaluators were on occasion reluctant to listen to points.				

Very safe and always heard.
I never felt unsafe – what we said was always respected by Pobal staff. If there were issues, they tried to resolve them impartially.
No hesitation in sharing and expressing view points at meetings.
I felt this was a safe environment to express your opinions about the project, particularly the difficulties of the project at a local level. It was useful to hear about the challenges of other projects.
Yes. Although it was difficult to gauge the understanding, attitudes and reactions of other groups at times.

Notes: Based on Evaluation Questionnaire. Summary of Text Answers to Q2.1-2.4 at end-point assessment.

Table 14: Did you experience the group as a supportive environment for learning?

Question	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
2.3 experience the group as a supportive environment to say what you think or feel	2	5	3.8	4
Text				
Yes – otherwise I would not have kept attending!				
I got great ideas and support from everyone I spoke to especially the later meetings.				
Absolutely – there was incredible peer support and follow-up.				
The group was always supportive however it was disappointing that the learning community did not get to fully focus on ‘learning’.				
It was a good opportunity to learn from other projects and sharing ideas. The degree of ‘usefulness’ varied from meeting to meeting.				
Again, as NEYAI staff it is difficult to answer but I always found that I learned new information and about project implementation. From watching project staff interaction, I think they found the meetings informative but would have like more time to exchange with each other.				
There were connections made on a one to one basis that were supportive and useful. I found the group as a whole being supportive only at one or two meetings.				
It was a very supportive learning environment. I would have liked the opportunity to meet with similar programme’s to ours but this was not possible due to time restraints.				
This was more my fault as I did not attend a lot of the meetings and sometimes found it difficult to catch up when I did. However, representatives from ELI found it very beneficial and used the learning to benefit our project.				
Yes positive sometimes projects got caught up in very fine detail with individual projects, but other than that positive.				
I feel there could have been even more opportunities to learn from each other’s expertise and this was not always facilitated.				
Although groups shared their findings and experiences there was seldom a shared agreement of learning from this. This did not begin to happen until the finishing stages of the project.				

Notes: Based on Evaluation Questionnaire. Summary of Text Answers to Q2.1-2.4 at end-point assessment.

Table 15: Did you enjoy meetings of the Learning Community?

Question	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
2.4 enjoy meetings of the learning community	1	5	3.9	4
Text				
I mostly enjoyed them, in particular the updates regarding the national evaluation and meeting in small groups with other similar projects, some of the guest speakers were good. The parts I didn’t enjoy was when some items dragged on and the agenda was not adhered to.				
Nice to be able to engage with other projects.				
Yes – and the lunches and coffee breaks presented good opportunities for interaction.				
Increasingly so as people settled down, as hidden agenda’s were made explicit and resolved, as the inter-relationships strengthened i.e. between project staff and project staff and between project staff and Pobal staff. It was very reassuring and affirming that we arrived at a sense of purpose in working				

for the greater good of improving services for disadvantaged children and their families. There was very little ego or competitiveness and this was a very positive sign reflecting the gelling and bonding of the LC membership.
I looked forward to the meetings as I gave some head space to reflect and connect with colleagues
Yes, I looked forward to meetings because I saw them as an opportunity to meet colleagues, share successes and struggles, and learn.
Yes they were always pleasant.
Thoroughly enjoyed meeting other project members and NEYAI staff especially as time progressed and we got to know each other better.
There is always tension involved in organising meetings to ensure they are run well and that meeting objectives are achieved. Once underway, the meetings became more enjoyable.
Always went away with a renewed energy.
Overall it was a chore. The Evaluation was the major obstacle to enjoyment.
Initially I was a little anxious but this did not last long. Building relationships' is an integral part of the work we do and the LC were an opportunity to build positive working relationships.
It was great to hear what others were doing and get a sense of all the NEYAI projects.
Yes positive just difficult to make time for the meetings given my own day job etc.
It was interesting to hear about the other projects and good to get the broader perspective at National Level. Attending the Learning Community opened my eyes with regard to the evaluation and its purpose. I also learned about the broader context of our project within the NEYAI at the learning community. The meetings were useful for all this, but they weren't a huge learning opportunity, and did not have a huge impact on my work at local level. Despite this, I did enjoy the meetings. A little break from the day to day hard slog and some distance from the project was always welcome also!
It was interesting to meet other groups, especially those with similar project to ours.

Notes: Based on Evaluation Questionnaire. Summary of Text Answers to Q2.1-2.4 at end-point assessment.

3 Balance Between Group Process and Task

Table 16.1: How well did the Learning Community maintain a focus at each meeting on the 'process' and the 'task'? End-point

Question	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
3.1 How well did the Learning Community maintain a focus at each meeting on the 'process'* and the 'task'*?	1	4	3	3

*The 'process' of the meeting refers to 'how things are done'. The 'task' of the meeting refers to 'what is done'. Successful groups maintain a balance between focusing on both task and process.

Notes: Based on Evaluation Questionnaire. Summary of Answers to Q3.1 at end-point assessment.

1- too much focus on 'process'; 2=about right; 5=too much focus on 'task'

Table 16.2: How well did the Learning Community maintain a focus at each meeting on the 'process' and the 'task'? Mid-point

Question	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
3.1 How well did the Learning Community maintain a focus at each meeting on the 'process' and the 'task'?	1	4	2.6	3

Notes: Based on Evaluation Questionnaire. Summary of Answers to Q3.1 at mid-point assessment.

1- too much focus on 'process'; 2=about right; 5=too much focus on 'task'

Table 17: How well did the Learning Community maintain a focus at each meeting on the ‘process’ and the ‘task’?

Question	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
3.1 How well did the Learning Community maintain a focus at each meeting on the ‘process’ and the ‘task’?	1	4	3	3
Text				
The meetings got this right and digression from the agenda was permitted where necessary – a good balance.				
Both were managed in balance, most of the time. This is a bi-product of competent facilitation and good planning. If process needed the attention it got it, likewise with task. It worked well from my perspective.				
I felt the time reflected in the task as there was a lot of discussion about individual projects and I would liked to have felt apart of a collaborative shared outcome.				
I think we missed opportunities where/when we became bogged down on ticking the boxes, rather than running with rich conversation.				
This is a difficult question to answer as on the face of it you could say that there was a fairly good balance between process and getting what was set out done in each meeting however I feel that there was an issue with the overall learning community focus and outcomes for learning.				
Often felt there was too much focus on process at the expense of having sufficient time to discuss the bigger issues and achieving outcomes.				
There was a good balance between process and task in that most meetings were interactive and achieved what was set out in terms of objectives with the exception of about 2 meetings that had too packed an agenda.				
Well managed.				
Sometimes it felt that there was too much focus on process rather than doing tasks so that we have a product at the end of the day’s work.				
The LC didn’t set itself tasks except at the very end.				
There was open discussion on both and getting the balance occurred.				
It was just about right – people were allowed talk and yet the agenda was covered.				
Meetings were focused (break-out groups could drift sometimes going of topic).				
I think it would have been more useful sometimes to hear about how other projects achieved their goals; the process was not always clear.				
There was an urgency to keep within schedule and each agenda item did not get enough time to involve in depth exploration.				
The pacing was important for completing the agenda, but providing space for collateral and extended discussions is also important and there simply wasn’t enough time to do this.				

Notes: Based on Evaluation Questionnaire. Summary of Text Answers to Q3.1 at end-point assessment.

4 Group Identity

Table 18.1: Please give your assessment of group identity in the Learning Community? End-Point

Question	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
4.1 How strong was the bond holding the learning community together?	1	5	2.9	3
4.2 Do you think the learning community saw itself and its work as 'necessary and urgent' or 'optional and not urgent'?	1	5	2.6	2
4.3 Would you say there was a strong desire within the group to succeed as a learning community?	1	4	3	3

Notes: Based on Evaluation Questionnaire. Summary of Answers to Q4.1-4.3 at end-point assessment. 1=negative rating; 3=average rating; 5=positive rating.

Table 18.2: Please give your assessment of group identity in the Learning Community? Mid-point

Question	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
4.1 How strong was the bond holding the learning community together?	1	4	2.5	2.5
4.2 Do you think the learning community saw itself and its work as 'necessary and urgent' or 'optional and not urgent'?	1	5	2.4	2
4.3 Would you say there was a strong desire within the group to succeed as a learning community?	1	5	3.3	4

Notes: Based on Evaluation Questionnaire. Summary of Answers to Q4.1-4.3 at mid-point assessment. 1=negative rating; 3=average rating; 5=positive rating.

Table 19: How strong was the bond holding the Learning Community together?

Question	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
4.1 How strong was the bond holding the learning community together?	1	5	2.9	3
Text				
By the second year I feel a good bond was beginning to form				
The glue of shared funding and commitment to children and families was a psychological glue that held us together. I saw little or no destructive / negative contributions.				
It improved and got stronger over time. My sense is that it would have continued to improve had there been more time. The L.C. took a long time to get established on a sound interactional basis – to create the necessary conditions for trust, safety, confident and courageous sharing, for the mutual parity of esteem between Pobal, the groups and the evaluation team. I sensed a maturation process over the years that was eventually ripe for continued solid work but time did not permit this to happen as the Initiative is time-boundaried.				
By the last meeting the bond was very strong but this took time naturally gaining trust and building that relationships.				
I would imagine that, for the most part, the LC was seen as a funding obligation than an actual functioning, learning network.				

Not strong
I felt a particular bond with those projects which I had contact with in between meetings and which there was overlap in terms of the project focus.
For some it was stronger than others....it probably depended on theme and also on their own stage of development. Those projects that recruited late or experienced problems with recruitment, probably found it harder to engage for some time. It might have helped to have had more formal 'organisational' input eg about how to manage or develop consortium work.
There was some group identity created by its adversity to the flawed evaluation process
For people who attended all the time the bond was very strong but for people like myself, who dropped in and out, it was not particularly strong. Saying that, the bond between NEYAI project has carried over to the ABC project, where we are very supportive of each other.
Projects were brought together through NEYAI funding but without this element there was no strong cross fertilisation across the 11 projects they have remained separate individual projects.
Having only attended twice I did not experience this, but perhaps those who attended more frequently did.
I think the Learning Community was an obligation as part of the project for groups to attend but not sure if it was optional if there would have been the same commitment from all groups.
Distances between projects prohibited ongoing (face to face) contact in some cases.
<i>Notes: Based on Evaluation Questionnaire. Summary of Text Answers to Q4.1-4.3 at end-point assessment. 1=negative rating; 3=average rating; 5=positive rating.</i>

Table 20: Do you think the Learning Community saw itself and its work as ‘necessary and urgent’ or ‘optional and not urgent’?

Question	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
4.2 Do you think the learning community saw itself and its work as ‘necessary and urgent’ or ‘optional and not urgent’?	1	5	2.6	2
Text				
I feel that some participants felt that the work was additional and an inconvenience. I enjoyed the days and feel that creating a sense of “We are NEYAI” was important.				
Yes – it was a learning experience for me as I hadn’t been involved in a formal LC before.				
Again, this changed over time. Nearing the end, it saw its existence and its work as optional, necessary and particularly urgent in its ability to inform new programme developments in the sector (ABC etc.)				
All involved in the learning community are passionate and highly motivated in their field.				
Case in point – the reluctance to do anything remotely pro-active around the Children’s Referendum.				
Sense of the group was that projects participated as it was a funding requirement rather than a shared vision or collective.				
I think it was seen as important to attend.				
The LC projects had likely quite different expectations initially. Most projects did want their work to influence policy, but it was not clear how they anticipated that might happen other than through individual project work. Project Consortiums also proved a challenging backdrop to many LC discussions as they impacted expectations. It proved challenging to develop the sense of an overall Initiative, partly because of the different focus of each project but also because of the challenge of the national evaluation and its requirements. It may not have been possible to do the national evaluation without LC dialogue and the opportunity to update projects collectively and get their feedback / input. Some projects never really grasped that sense of a national Initiative until the final results came through and this was positive for most (...almost a surprise!) and less so for a few.				
Reflected its relevance in terms of its relationship to the primary focus of work for all – the project				
Initially optional and not urgent. As other items happened quickly in the sector the learning community started to see itself and its work as necessary and urgent to impart learning on the sector.				
The vast majority of members saw this as something extraneous to their core role.				
It was clear that the work we were doing was necessary and that there was tasks that had to be achieved within a clear time frame.				
When you are very busy it is hard to prioritise taking time out from implementation but the meetings were necessary and important.				

Felt members participated on the basis it provided an opportunity for discussion and learning but did not get the sense from those present that it was necessary and urgent.
In my experiences at the learning community people often left early, suggesting that the day was too long. Usually this pertained to those who had to travel, however I also noticed that those who worked in Dublin left early to attend other meetings/commitments, suggesting that perhaps these meetings were not a priority.
My experience of the group was that it was necessary, but not urgent. The group were very concerned by what impact their work was having at national level, and how this work was influencing policy in this area. Despite this it is hard to (currently) ascertain whether this has actually happened at national level. At local level, like many of the projects, we can speak to our impact (through standardised assessment and evaluation), and our outcomes and message is clear. But what will happen to the message coming out of our project? We don't know where that will go, and who will hear it. I had thought the learning community might spearhead this work, but it remains to be seen if this will actually happen.
I think the Learning Community took some time to develop and there appeared to be a lack of clarity regarding the goals it aimed to achieve.
I think most coordinators saw it as important but their individual project level work superseded it.
<i>Notes: Based on Evaluation Questionnaire. Summary of Text Answers to Q4.1-4.3 at end-point assessment. 1=negative rating; 3=average rating; 5=positive rating.</i>

Table 21: Would you say there was a strong desire within the group to succeed as a Learning Community?

Question	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
4.3 Would you say there was a strong desire within the group to succeed as a learning community?	1	4	3	3
Text				
Strong desire to learn from each other and from speakers/evaluators etc				
Not sure				
Yes – it was strong and it was not competitive. It was a positive factor.				
No, I never got the sense that the group had a desire to succeed, just to exist!				
There was a strong desire to succeed but I'm not sure if there was success as a collaborative.				
Not for a significant number of members. The portal was evidence of this – an opportunity to connect between LC meetings, and used by very few projects. To those who were motivated, there was a desire to succeed but that was diluted by the fact that they were a minority within the LC.				
I felt this very much when we started in 2011. However as noted elsewhere this was probably impacted by the focus of the group over time.				
I don't think succeeding as a group was important in itself.				
Yes the LC did want to collectively influence policy but the time frame for implementation and evaluation was very short. Project and Initiative learning is really only coming through now and this needs time for the LC to assemble the information and strategise around it to select some key topics / issues / actions for further engagement / lobby / meetings / round tables etc.				
I think most had a desire to succeed as a learning community however I think some didn't see the relevance until the last 6/12 months				
No real sense that the group was empowered to overcome obstacles to success. I am not sure that there was much will there either.				
It depended on the projects and the individuals involved. Change-over in personal among the projects did not help the group bond as a learning community. We were there to present our projects. The application process, where it was very competitive to secure funding, did not help as we began the learning community as competitors rather than collaborators.				
Yes- I think this was demonstrated particularly with the desire to articulate the learning of each of the projects with upcoming national conference and findings from national evaluation.				
I did always get the feeling that those attending the learning community were passionate about their work, and believed in their message and results.				
I think each group were more committed to their own individual projects and it was difficult to find common ground with the 11 groups being so diverse.				

Strong desire of group to succeed on project overall.

Notes: Based on Evaluation Questionnaire. Summary of Text Answers to Q4.1-4.3 at end-point assessment.
1=negative rating; 3=average rating; 5=positive rating.

5 Group Learning Skills

Table 22.1: Please give your assessment of group learning skills in the Learning Community? End-Point

Question	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
5.1 How attentively did people listen to each other in the learning community?	3	5	4	4
5.2 Did the quality of interactions in the learning community create a space for 'sustained shared thinking'*?	1	5	3	3
5.3 How would you characterise the quality of dialogue in the learning community in terms of how people used 'open-and-exploratory statements'* or 'closed-and-declaratory statements'*?	2	5	3.6	3
5.4 Which aspect of learning was given greater emphasis in the learning community: 'objective learning' or 'subjective learning'?	2	4	2.9	3

*5.2 'Sustained shared thinking' is when a group works together to solve a problem, clarify a concept, evaluate activities, or identify new ways of thinking.

*5.3 'Open-and-exploratory statements' normally contain a question and invite discussion. 'Closed-and-declaratory statements' tend to set out an established position which may not be open for discussion.

*5.4 'Objective learning' gives emphasis to facts and evidence, and to interventions that work. 'Subjective learning' gives emphasis to reflecting on how learning is framed by the subject and the limitations of knowledge.

Notes: Based on Evaluation Questionnaire. Summary of Answers to Q5.1-5.4 at end-point assessment.
1=negative rating; 3=average rating; 5=positive rating.

Table 22.2: Please give your assessment of group learning skills in the Learning Community? Mid-Point

Question	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
5.1 How attentively did people listen to each other in the learning community?	2	5	3.7	4
5.2 Did the quality of interactions in the learning community create a space for 'sustained shared thinking'?	1	4	3.1	3
5.3 How would you characterise the quality of dialogue in the learning community in terms of how people used 'open-and-exploratory statements' or 'closed-and-declaratory statements'?	2	4	3.2	3
5.4 Which aspect of learning was given greater emphasis in the learning community: 'objective learning' or 'subjective learning'?	2	4	3.2	3

Notes: Based on Evaluation Questionnaire. Summary of Answers to Q5.1-5.4 at mid-point assessment. 1=negative rating; 3=average rating; 5=positive rating.

Table 23: How attentively did people listen to each other in the Learning Community?

Question	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
5.1 How attentively did people listen to each other in the learning community?	3	5	4	4
Text				
Mostly attentive				
I think most people listen very well. A lot of people would approach me to ask about things I discussed in the group and visa versa				
I'm being self-critical in admitting to responding to an occasional urgent e-mail while using wi-fi for taking NEYAI notes! The other attendees seemed to be very attentive.				
The group was very experienced and skilled at listening in a respectful way that produced the opportunities to learn. Those who had been more 'dominant' at the beginning became gradually more reflective and other voices came to the fore with slightly different things to say and different way of saying them., all of which added to the opportunities to learn.				
Some people spoke more than others				
To be fair, people were always respectful and listening was generally attentive (if the hearing wasn't always!).				
Everyone was very respectful.				
People listened very well, supported, challenged, explored further etc. However, I would reiterate that on the big issues they were not acted upon by those who had the power to do so.				
This was very good.				
I think there was genuine interest to hear what other groups were doing.				
In some sub groups I found that some members did not give time to others to talk.				
People listened to each other and were very interested in what other projects were doing.				
Engagement with each other on the various issues which were discussed at the meetings.				
I felt this was a very positive element of the meetings.				
All groups listened courteously to each others contributions.				

Notes: Based on Evaluation Questionnaire. Summary of Text Answers to Q5.1-5.4 at end-point assessment.

Table 24: Did the quality of interactions in the Learning Community create a space for ‘sustained shared thinking’?

Question	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
5.2 Did the quality of interactions in the learning community create a space for ‘sustained shared thinking’?	1	5	3	3
Text				
Yes – the delegated / group tasks involved sustained shared thinking.				
Yes, more and more as time went on and in the context of thematic work, sharing resources and experiences of what worked and didn’t work, and especially in planning for the conference.				
The groups I was in had good opportunities to share views and issues with one another.				
I get the sense that we were just getting to that point when the wind-down phase began.				
On reflection there was few opportunities to do this.				
Laudable but lofty! I think this happened when we had a specific task such as organising the national event. However, because of the diversity of projects, approaches being taken and variety of stages in project timeline, sharing of info and ideas was mainly what happened in the ‘space’ - this was useful in itself.				
This did happen on a few occasions and did lead to follow -up actions with policy makers. Time frames (see 4.2 and 4.3 above) were short and space between meetings long so agendas were packed which made more detailed discussions leading to resultant actions less possible /common. This was starting to happen more....but if the ABC or NEYSS had been timed to pick up on and follow through the NEYAI learning, the LC could have had a more focused role.				
I cannot think of one example where the group did this.				
I think that this was facilitated well and this helped the above process to take place.				
I am not sure that there was the space for this – the projects were very different and there was no central theme that flowed from meeting to meeting. Again, for sustained shared thinking you need people to be comfortable with each other and I think that it worked for single, once-off issues. Frequent changes in personnel does create an environment for this way of working.				
Sometimes – particularly where projects identified shared experiences and interests perhaps greater links could have built with the projects to develop key learning and seek to influence policy nationally.				
There was sharing thinking, but not particularly sustained. The coming together of similar projects to talk about shared goals, challenges and difficulties could have been more sustained.				
I did not witness a lot of sustained shared thinking as group discussions often lost focus.				

Notes: Based on Evaluation Questionnaire. Summary of Text Answers to Q5.1-5.4 at end-point assessment.

Table 25: How would you characterise the quality of dialogue in the Learning Community in terms of how people used ‘open-and-exploratory statements’ or ‘closed-and-declaratory statements’?

Question	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
5.3 How would you characterise the quality of dialogue in the learning community in terms of how people used ‘open-and-exploratory statements’ or ‘closed-and-declaratory statements’?	2	5	3.6	3
Text				
I don’t know				
There was little or no closed thinking (apart from the early disappointments of excluding the<3YO children and not carrying out individual project evaluations).				
The quality of the dialogue was very good especially when the group sub-divided into smaller groups to discuss the qualitative and thematic elements of the work and to plan for the conference or to reflect on quality mentoring, for example.				
I think each person had their own agenda and therefore it depended on the personality and style of				

them. I think about terms were used throughout the meetings.
A combination of both, but leaning more in the direction of open and exploratory.
Tended to both - sometimes providing information from experience but mainly in an open way - dogmatism was rare but not absent altogether!
The workshop sessions seemed to offer this space for more open and exploratory statements. The spirit of the LC was to have open and exploratory dialogue.
The learning community was full of opportunities for discussion.
I don't think anybody felt they had the answer to anything.
Again it was facilitated well to ensure that there was lots of open and exploratory statements.
It was mixed depending on the topic and the people involved.
People tend to refer to issues sighting their own projects as example of addressing issue rather than inviting critical comment or dialogue. Presentations from projects provided an opportunity for people to open such discussion this did not always happen.
Each groups main interest was sharing learning from their own groups. Again, it was difficult to relate to some groups as the 11 groups were so diverse in nature.
This was linked to the agenda items e.g. project updates did not have enough time for open and exploratory statements.

Notes: Based on Evaluation Questionnaire. Summary of Text Answers to Q5.1-5.4 at end-point assessment.

Table 26: Which aspect of learning was given greater emphasis in the Learning Community: 'objective learning' or 'subjective learning'?

Question	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
5.4 Which aspect of learning was given greater emphasis in the learning community: 'objective learning' or 'subjective learning'?	2	4	2.9	3
Text				
Not sure				
I felt that it was correctly tending towards objective learning.				
This was probably in balance over the duration with different emphasis depending on what was needed at different meetings. Therefore, it was needs-based and intuitive.				
Subjective learning, to a certain extent, came about through discussions on the national evaluation but the LC leaned more towards the objective.				
Unsure in relation to learning within the community itself, however within the projects I think facts and evidence were seen as essential - hence the increase in the number of local evaluations when the direction of the national evaluation was seen as not capturing the learning from the interventions.				
Hard to answer this! I think it was fairly equally balanced as the evidence was only emerging and up to that, discussions were more anecdotal and focused on experiences or feelings about what worked or didn't; sometimes this was more evidence based and projects loved to learn / exchange this kind of information and exchange ideas about materials, tools approaches, outcomes.				
I think that there was a mix of both, which was healthy.				
Each of the project had a built in process locally through local evaluations to demonstrate and provide evidence of interventions and if they worked. Meetings provided space to discuss local evaluations and approaches and learning from this.				

Notes: Based on Evaluation Questionnaire. Summary of Text Answers to Q5.1-5.4 at end-point assessment.

Part C – Outcomes of Learning Community

6 Size of Influence on Thinking and Actions

Table 27.1: How much has this meeting of the Learning Community influenced your thinking or actions about ways of improving outcomes for children?

ID	Date of Meeting										Mean
	9-11	11-11	2-12	6-12	10-12	2-13	6-13	10-13	2-14	4-14	
BC			3.0	2.0	3.0	3.0		3.0	3.0	4.0	3.0
CC		3.0		3.0		4.0	4.0			4.0	3.6
CK		3.0	2.0	3.0		2.7	2.0	1.5	3.0		2.4
CN		2.7	3.0	3.5	2.0	2.0		2.0	3.0		2.7
DD		3.0	3.0	3.0	3.5	3.0	3.5		3.0	3.0	3.2
DL		2.5	2.0	2.3	1.7	2.0		2.0	1.0	2.0	2.0
FL		3.0	3.0			4.0	4.0	4.0			3.7
LD		4.0	2.0	2.5		3.0	3.0		4.0	3.0	3.0
LK		3.0	2.0	2.5	2.5	1.0	3.0	3.0			2.5
RO					3.0	1.0		2.0		4.0	2.5
TT		3.0		3.0		3.0	3.0	4.0		3.0	3.2
Total		2.9	2.5	2.7	2.5	2.7	3.2	2.6	2.8	3.3	2.9

Notes: Based on Monitoring Instrument. Answers to Q1.1. Mean Scores per project by date of meeting. 1=not at all; 2=very little; 3=somewhat; 4=a lot

Table 27.2: How much has this meeting of the Learning Community influenced your thinking or actions about ways of improving outcomes for parents?

ID	Date of Meeting										Mean
	9-11	11-11	2-12	6-12	10-12	2-13	6-13	10-13	2-14	4-14	
BC			2.0	2.0	2.0	3.0		2.0	2.0	2.0	2.1
CC				3.0		4.0	4.0			4.0	3.8
CK		3.0	2.0			3.0	2.0	2.0	1.0		2.3
CN		3.0	2.0	3.5	1.0	2.0		2.0	3.0		2.6
DD		3.0	3.0	2.5	3.5	3.0	2.5		3.0	3.0	2.9
DL		2.5	2.0	2.7	1.7	2.0		2.0	1.0	2.0	2.1
FL		2.0	3.5			4.0	3.5	4.0			3.6
LD		3.0	3.0	3.0		4.0	2.5		3.0	3.0	3.0
LK		3.0	3.0	2.5	2.0	1.0	3.5	3.0			2.6
RO					3.0	1.0		2.0		4.0	2.5
TT		3.0		3.0		3.0	3.0	4.0		3.0	3.2
Total		2.8	2.7	2.8	2.2	2.9	2.9	2.6	2.2	3.0	2.8

Notes: Based on Monitoring Instrument. Answers to Q.2. Mean Scores per project by date of meeting. 1=not at all; 2=very little; 3=somewhat; 4=a lot

Table 27.3: How much has this meeting of Learning Community influenced your thinking or actions about ways of improving outcomes for staff?

ID	Date of Meeting										Mean
	9-11	11-11	2-12	6-12	10-12	2-13	6-13	10-13	2-14	4-14	
BC			3.0	3.0	2.0	3.0		3.0	3.0	3.0	2.9
CC		4.0		3.0		4.0	4.0			3.0	3.6
CK		3.0	2.0			2.3	2.0	2.5	3.0		2.4
CN		3.3	3.0	3.0	1.0	3.0		3.0	4.0		3.0
DD		3.0	3.0	3.0	2.5	3.0	3.5		3.0	3.0	3.0
DL		2.5	2.0	2.7	1.7	2.0		1.5	1.0	2.0	2.0
FL		3.0	3.5			3.0	4.0	3.5			3.4
LD		3.0	2.0	3.0		3.0	3.0		3.0	2.0	2.8
LK		2.0	3.0	1.5	2.5	1.0	3.0	3.0			2.4
RO					1.0	1.0		2.0		4.0	2.0
TT		3.0		3.0		3.0	3.0	3.0		3.0	3.0
Total		3.0	2.8	2.7	1.9	2.6	3.2	2.6	2.8	2.9	2.8

Notes: Based on Monitoring Instrument. Answers to Q1.3. Mean Scores per project by date of meeting. 1=not at all; 2=very little; 3=somewhat; 4=a lot

Table 27.4: How much has this meeting of the Learning Community influenced your thinking or actions about ways of improving the early years sector?

ID	Date of Meeting										Mean
	9-11	11-11	2-12	6-12	10-12	2-13	6-13	10-13	2-14	4-14	
BC			3.0	3.0	2.0	3.0		3.0	3.0	4.0	3.0
CC		4.0		3.0		3.0	4.0			3.0	3.4
CK		3.0				2.7	2.5	3.0	2.0		2.7
CN		3.3	3.0	3.5	2.0	3.0		3.0	4.0		3.2
DD		4.0	3.5	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.5		3.0	3.0	3.3
DL		3.0	2.0	2.7	1.7	2.0		2.5	1.0	2.0	2.2
FL		3.0	3.5			3.5	4.0	3.0			3.4
LD		4.0	3.0	2.5		3.0	3.0		3.0	3.0	3.0
LK		3.0	2.5	2.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0			2.7
RO					1.0	1.0		2.0		4.0	2.0
TT		3.0		3.0		3.0	3.0	4.0		3.0	3.2
Total		3.4	2.9	2.8	2.2	2.8	3.3	2.9	2.7	3.1	2.9

Notes: Based on Monitoring Instrument. Answers to Q1.4. Mean Scores per project by date of meeting. 1=not at all; 2=very little; 3=somewhat; 4=a lot

Table 27.5: How much has this meeting of the Learning Community influenced your thinking or actions about ways of improving any other aspect of your work?

ID	Date of Meeting										Mean
	9-11	11-11	2-12	6-12	10-12	2-13	6-13	10-13	2-14	4-14	
BC			3.0		3.0	4.0		2.0	3.0	4.0	3.2
CC		4.0				4.0				3.0	3.7
CK		3.0	2.0			2.7	2.0	2.5			2.4
CN		3.0	3.0	4.0	2.0	3.0					3.1
DD		3.5	2.5	3.0	3.5	3.0	3.5		2.0	3.0	3.1
DL		2.0	1.5	2.0	2.0	2.0		1.5	1.0	2.0	1.8
FL		4.0	3.5			3.0	4.0	3.0			3.5
LD		3.0	3.0	4.0		3.0	3.0		3.0	3.0	3.2
LK		3.0	3.0	2.5	2.5	3.0	3.0	2.0			2.7
RO					3.0	3.0		2.0		4.0	3.0
TT		3.0		3.0		3.0	3.0	3.0		1.0	2.7
Total		3.1	2.6	3.0	2.6	3.0	3.1	2.3	2.3	2.9	2.9

Notes: Based on Monitoring Instrument. Answers to Q1.5. Mean Scores per project by date of meeting. 1=not at all; 2=very little; 3=somewhat; 4=a lot

7 Sources of Influence on Thinking and Actions

Table 28.1: Influence of other NEYAI projects on thinking or likely future actions

ID	Date of Meeting										Mean
	9-11	11-11	2-12	6-12	10-12	2-13	6-13	10-13	2-14	4-14	
BC			1	1	1	1		1	1		6
CC		1		1		1	1			1	5
CK		1	1	1		1	1	1	1		7
CN		1	1	1	1			1	1		6
DD		1	1	1	1	1	1		1		7
DL		1		1		1		1	1		5
FL			1			1	1	1			4
LD		1	1	1		1	1		1		6
LK		1	1	1	1	1	1	1			7
RO						1		1			2
TT		1		1		1	1	1		1	6
Total	0	8	7	9	4	10	7	8	6	2	61

Notes: Based on Monitoring Instrument. Answers to Q2.1. Positive Responses per project by date of meeting.

Table 28.2: Influence of invited speakers on thinking or likely future actions

ID	Date of Meeting										Mean
	9-11	11-11	2-12	6-12	10-12	2-13	6-13	10-13	2-14	4-14	
BC				1	1					1	3
CC		1		1		1				1	4
CK											0
CN		1		1		1					3
DD		1		1	1						3
DL				1	1						2
FL		1				1	1				3
LD		1		1		1					3
LK		1		1							2
RO					1						1
TT										1	1
Total	0	6	0	7	4	4	1	0	0	3	25

Notes: Based on Monitoring Instrument. Answers to Q2.2. Positive Responses per project by date of meeting.

Table 28.3: Influence of Pobal on thinking or likely future actions

ID	Date of Meeting										Mean
	9-11	11-11	2-12	6-12	10-12	2-13	6-13	10-13	2-14	4-14	
BC											0
CC		1		1		1					3
CK						1			1		2
CN		1						1			2
DD		1	1				1		1		4
DL			1	1							2
FL			1			1	1	1			4
LD										1	1
LK					1	1	1				3
RO											0
TT		1				1		1			3
Total	0	4	3	2	1	5	3	3	2	1	24

Notes: Based on Monitoring Instrument. Answers to Q2.3. Positive Responses per project by date of meeting.

Table 28.4: Influence of facilitator on thinking or likely future actions

ID	Date of Meeting										Mean
	9-11	11-11	2-12	6-12	10-12	2-13	6-13	10-13	2-14	4-14	
BC											0
CC		1		1		1				1	4
CK							1				1
CN		1		1							2
DD		1			1						2
DL				1							1
FL			1								1
LD											0
LK											0
RO											0
TT								1			1
Total	0	3	1	3	1	1	1	1	0	1	12

Notes: Based on Monitoring Instrument. Answers to Q2.4. Positive Responses per project by date of meeting.

Table 28.5: Influence of evaluation team on thinking or likely future actions

ID	Date of Meeting										Mean
	9-11	11-11	2-12	6-12	10-12	2-13	6-13	10-13	2-14	4-14	
BC										1	1
CC		1		1		1	1			1	5
CK				1		1	1				3
CN		1				1					2
DD		1		1		1	1			1	5
DL		1	1	1	1	1				1	6
FL		1	1								2
LD		1		1		1	1		1	1	6
LK			1	1		1	1				4
RO						1				1	2
TT				1		1	1			1	4
Total	0	6	3	7	1	9	6	0	1	7	40

Notes: Based on Monitoring Instrument. Answers to Q2.5. Positive Responses per project by date of meeting.

Table 29: Number of contacts with other NEYAI projects since the last meeting of the Learning Community

ID	Date of Meeting										Mean
	9-11	11-11	2-12	6-12	1-12	2-13	6-13	1-13	2-14	4-14	
BC				3		1		2		4	10
CC											0
CK		1	6	11		2	3	19	28		70
CN		2	6	12	3	6		2			31
DD		1	3	2	5						11
DL		1						1			2
FL		7				11	9	15			42
LD		3		2		6	5				16
LK			4	2	3	4		3			16
RO						1		4			5
TT		2				2	8	7		7	26
Total	0	17	19	32	11	33	25	53	28	11	229

Notes: Based on Monitoring Instrument. Answers to Q3.1-3.11.

Table 30.1: Number of events (such as conferences, seminars or training workshops) attended since last meeting

ID	Date of Meeting										Mean
	9-11	11-11	2-12	6-12	1-12	2-13	6-13	1-13	2-14	4-14	
BC			1			2		2	1	2	8
CC				4		2	1			2	9
CK		7	1	8		5	6	4	4		35
CN		3	3	9	1						16
DD		6	5	1	4	1	7		4	8	36
DL			3	2	5					2	12
FL		2	3			6	6	7			24
LD		3		3		2	4		2	3	17
LK		3	5	3	9	2	3	7			32
RO											0
TT				1							1
Total	0	24	21	31	19	20	27	20	11	17	190

Notes: Based on Monitoring Instrument. Answers to Q4.2.

Table 30.2: Did these events influence your thinking or actions about any aspect of your work?

ID	Date of Meeting										Mean
	9-11	11-11	2-12	6-12	1-12	2-13	6-13	1-13	2-14	4-14	
BC			4.0			2.0		4.0	3.0	3.0	3.2
CC				4.0		3.0	2.0			4.0	3.3
CK		4.0	3.0	4.0		3.5	4.0	3.0	3.0		3.5
CN		3.0	3.0	3.5	3.0						3.2
DD		4.0	4.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	3.0		4.0	3.0	3.6
DL			3.0	2.5	4.0					2.0	2.8
FL		4.0	4.0			3.0	3.5	3.0			3.4
LD		4.0		3.5		3.0	3.0		3.0	3.0	3.3
LK		3.0	2.0	3.0	4.0	4.0	2.0	3.0			3.0
RO											
TT				3.0							3.0
Total		3.7	3.3	3.3	3.8	3.2	3.0	3.2	3.3	3.0	3.2

Notes: Based on Monitoring Instrument. Answers to Q4.3. Mean Scores per project by date of meeting. 1=not at all; 2=very little; 3=somewhat; 4=a lot

8 Influence on Outcomes

Table 31.1: Please give your assessment of outcomes of the Learning Community? End-Point

Question	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
6.1 Have there been any individual-level outcomes for you as a person* as a result of attending the learning community?	2	5	3.1	3
6.2 Have there been any outcomes for your NEYAI project* as a result of attending the learning community?	1	5	2.9	3
Have there been any outcomes for the NEYAI initiative* as a result of attending the learning community?	1	5	2.8	3
6.4 Have there been any outcomes for the early years sector* as a result of attending the learning community?	1	5	2.9	3
6.5 Overall, do you think the outcomes of the learning community have been worth the time and effort spent on this aspect of NEYAI?	2	5	3.8	4

*6.1 This should be something that your regard as personally significant. For example, learning something important; gaining a new insight; unlearning or letting go of assumptions not supported by your experience or other evidence.

*6.2 This should be something that has made a significant difference to your project. For example, an improved way of implementing the programme, a better way of managing your consortium, or more supportive way of working staff in the centres.

*6.3 This should be something that your regard as significant for the initiative as a whole. For example, it could include joint actions, statements or publications by projects on behalf of NEYAI. It should not include casual contacts between projects such as emails and phone calls.

*This should be something that goes beyond the NEYAI and has an influence on wider practices or policies in the early years sector.

Notes: Based on Evaluation Questionnaire. Summary of Answers to Q6.1-6.5 at end-point assessment.
1=no outcomes; 5=many outcomes.

Table 31.2: Please give your assessment of outcomes of the Learning Community? Mid-Point

Question	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
6.1 Have there been any individual-level outcomes for you as a person* as a result of attending the learning community?	1	5	3.1	3.5
6.2 Have there been any outcomes for your NEYAI project* as a result of attending the learning community?	1	4	2.6	3
Have there been any outcomes for the NEYAI initiative* as a result of attending the learning community?	1	4	2.5	3
6.4 Have there been any outcomes for the early years sector* as a result of attending the learning community?	1	5	2.3	2
6.5 Overall, do you think the outcomes of the learning community have been worth the time and effort spent on this aspect of NEYAI?	1	5	3.6	4

Notes: Based on Evaluation Questionnaire. Summary of Answers to Q6.1-6.5 at mid-point assessment. 1=no outcomes; 5=many outcomes.

Table 32: Have there been any individual-level outcomes for you as a person as a result of attending the Learning Community?

Question	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
6.1 Have there been any individual-level outcomes for you as a person* as a result of attending the learning community?	2	5	3.1	3
Text				
Not sure				
My first formal engagement in a LC was positive and it confirmed my intuitive respect for the group dynamic and for diverse opinions.				
Yes, it reminded me that local practitioners are the real experts; that competent facilitation is very important when dealing with complex and diverse groups; that when collective talents, skill, experience etc. can be mobilised that outcomes are enriched; that a L.C. is a complex and intricate concept and to do it well requires immense understanding of task and process, time and space for detailed planning and review, a clear vision from the onset and ownership and buy-in, there needs to be something inspirational/transformational about what it wants to do; it needs nurturing and creative resourcing etc. (many of these attributes/conditions cannot be created in the current climate and business model and outcomes-focused way of working and measuring effectiveness and performance); that the sector has a long way to go and much to achieve before it measures up to the best European norms and standards; that it is potentially disastrous to separate out programme design and evaluation frameworks, or to retrofit an evaluation framework to a complex programme design - this reality had the potential to destabilise the LC but thankfully it didn't.....Much more learning besides.....				
I gained confidence in the project from attending the meetings, they helped me understand that all projects have challenges and limitations and felt I could move forward with the work because of this.				
It was a learning experience on a few fronts:				

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would now always use a facilitator when bringing such a diverse range of people together (Jane Clarke's role was excellent) • I no longer believe that it is always passion and belief that motivates people (probably a naive assumption to begin with.....) • An effective LC needs a good balance of personalities to be truly effective: I would apply this learning to future consortium/project membership
It was a valuable opportunity to connect with other projects and to focus specifically on the NEYAI.
I have learnt a lot about a range of interventions projects, structures, etc. happening at community level in different parts of the country. Unfortunately, I have been very disappointed about the direction the evaluation took - while acknowledging it is an important piece of research in itself. I would hold that, given the amount of public funding which went into the NEYAI projects, there are two major issues which were not addressed: accountability of projects and demonstration initiatives feeding into public. The goalposts changed, projects were used and side-lined and the learning lost.
Again, this is difficult to answer from NEYAI staff perspective as we were not implementing work at ground level. However, the LC was a very useful forum to keep contact with the projects; the collective discussions helped with planning and development of supports...(a little like child-led learning) and the meetings ensured equality of communications across projects (now that a Working Group exists, this is more difficult to maintain); the LC also facilitated buy-in (if painfully) to the national evaluation approach and led to the identification of the need to support some local level evaluations. I also learned that even though I was not hugely familiar with the EY sector, facilitating and supporting a LC can draw on a broader range of 'political' skills!
Think it verified and validation the development of the work we were engaged in, not being alone in the process
Gained knowledge about related areas within the sector i.e S&L, literacy & numeracy.
Made a few contacts with interesting people. I think we showed to other NEYAI project that Limerick is doing something worthy of interest.
I really enjoyed hearing what the other projects were involved in and that they were experiencing similar difficulties that my project may have been having regarding research.
I don't think that I attended enough meetings for there to be substantial change but I did find the whole process, particularly the evaluation, very interesting. It would have refined my thinking about demonstration projects, improving outcomes for children and evaluation.
Found the process undertaken through the national evaluation as very informative and the value of building in such approaches to project implementation as very useful
The learning community provided me with an insight into the national context of the project.
Knowing that others were experiencing the same challenges in their role was quite assuring and also sharing professional experiences and solutions also helped in my role as a Mentor.
I got a good insight into the complexities of diverse groups working together and the challenges of consortium working.
<i>Notes: Based on Evaluation Questionnaire. Summary of Text Answers to Q6.1-6.5 at end-point assessment. 1=no outcomes; 5=many outcomes.</i>

Table 33: Have there been any outcomes for your NEYAI project as a result of attending the Learning Community?

Question	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
6.2 Have there been any outcomes for your NEYAI project* as a result of attending the learning community?	1	5	2.9	3
Text				
Yes definitely some ideas from other projects that I used in my project				
Yes interagency connections with other projects, networking and getting ideas from other groups				
The very fact of being well behind schedule while other projects were making good progress was a good stimulant. Also, we recognised that without dedicated, higher-level resources we would not make the required progress to completion.				
I don't think the LC was effective enough to influence project direction or implementation but maybe that's ok. Personal learning (as in 6.1) influences daily work practices so there is some impact on the				

overall project.
The relationship with one of the other projects has involved two Speech and Language Therapists in Limerick piloting aspects of our programme - the feedback is extremely beneficial and will contribute to the manual which we are producing on our programme.
Support with staff teams, managing the consortium.
Links with Happy Talk have been very useful. A couple of the Dublin projects have been important links. Were able to share experience of a common HR challenge and provide support to projects that were struggling with a particular issue.
I think that the learning community had an incremental effect on our project that is hard to define. Staff would have brought back ideas and we would have incorporated them in our project. The interactions with Pobal and the evaluation team were also useful and again helped us to refine our project, in particular our evaluation processes. It also provided a venue to articulate what our project was about and refine our thinking about both our process and the outcomes we wanted to achieve. It also gave us a way of measuring progress and the quality of our project as we could compare the issues we were experiencing with those from other projects.
I do not think the learning community influenced the work of our project in any major way. The relationships made by the coordinator with other similar projects certainly provided an opportunity to gain insight, support and feedback however, and it is unlikely these relationships would have been cultivated without the learning community.
Collaborations with other project coordinators and staff in (unofficial) mentorship capacity and sharing of ideas.
<i>Notes: Based on Evaluation Questionnaire. Summary of Text Answers to Q6.1-6.5 at end-point assessment. 1=no outcomes; 5=many outcomes.</i>

Table 34: Have there been any outcomes for the NEYAI initiative as a result of attending the Learning Community?

Question	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
6.3 Have there been any outcomes for the NEYAI initiative* as a result of attending the learning community?	1	5	2.8	3
Text				
I guess the biggest outcome will be the National conference which is being organised by a sub-group of the LC				
?? Unclear as to this question				
The individual projects were quite diverse so this is a hard one. My fear is that, despite all the effort and investment, we will not be able to objectively justify what we know are appropriate and valued interventions.				
The findings and timing of the final evaluation present a wonderful opportunity to inform the sector about the choices to be made in the ongoing debate about quality, early intervention how early and what type, and the introduction of a second FPY. It will leave a very significant legacy – the uptake depends on politicians, policy makers and the extent to which practitioners actively engage with the evaluation findings to raise awareness and to lobby for change.				
I'm hopeful that the upcoming conference will change this. We missed opportunities for national press releases at prime times (referendum, budget etc.) and really need to take the learning from that. A glossy publication at the end of the initiative falls on deaf ears if practitioners and policy-makers don't know what NEYAI actually is. This should have been the responsibility of the projects, not the funders or national evaluators.				
On reflection I feel that there has not been a significant outcome for the Initiative as a whole as a result of attending the learning community.				
I think unfortunately NEYAI did not achieve outcomes in this area and feel this was a missed opportunity - there was one joint initiative that I can recall. In terms of influencing policy, this has been disappointing.				
Submissions to the DES EYPU and to the DCYA re early childhood strategy; Belated but indirect influence on new programmes ... perhaps merely to mitigate the worst effects of lack of evidence based approaches ironically but to say there is other learning available to draw on and there is a				

road to go yet in this regard.
Too early to say.
NEYAI does not seem to be taken seriously by DCYA.
On reflection having the joint research is a great asset to the NEYAI but having the Independent research is a extra bonus and perhaps we may not have thought about this without the help on LC.
Input into the early years framework along with the ABC programme. The evaluation documents and the conference. I also think, through Pobal, that NEYAI has influenced national early years policy.
Projects remained very individual in their approach little cross fertilisation among the 11 projects.
Better understanding at national level of how logistical issues on the ground affect data collection which is important for analysis and findings.
<i>Notes: Based on Evaluation Questionnaire. Summary of Text Answers to Q6.1-6.5 at end-point assessment. 1=no outcomes; 5=many outcomes.</i>

Table 35: Have there been any outcomes for the early years sector as a result of attending the Learning Community?

Question	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
6.4 Have there been any outcomes for the early years sector* as a result of attending the learning community?	1	5	2.9	3
Text				
Influence ABC?				
Yes – I believe that DCYA and DES are quite conscious of the NEYAI projects and that it has influenced their plans for 2014 onwards.				
Perhaps on a policy level but that we shall have to wait and see.				
Although not enough, we did input into the National Early Years Strategy as a collective group.				
Not sure.				
There is much learning at local level and some practices are mainstreamed eg every preschool and jnr school in Ballyfermot has been exposed to language acquisition reflective learning and Aistear based approaches and trained local staff remain to transfer learning; 90% of early years services in Donegal have been trained in Aistear based frameworks and transitions tools; Docklands numeracy outcomes for participating children have improved based on tests developed to evaluate new approaches to community / parent involvement in developing numeracy materials and tools etc.				
Much of this work was strengthened and extended through discussions and exchanges at LC; it is possible that some actions could be scaled up should adequate measures for follow up be developed in the final phase of NEYAI. The national evaluation can also contribute to this if the national NEYAI conference can feed back to a final LC strategy meeting.				
Too early to say.				
A wealth of publications have been developed through the projects which should be grouped together now i.e. all transition documents, all S&L documents, all family support etc which could support practice in the early years sector. Learning from project which implemented quality mentoring should be consider during the development of the National Quality Support Service.				
Cannot identify an outcome.				
I think the findings of the national evaluation will be very influential overall and I hope that it will bring about changes in policy. Raising awareness of the importance of parent-child relationship in the formative years and highlighting the importance of maternal well-being, diet, the home learning environment and social class is crucially important for the early years sector to feed back to relevant departments.				
There are now different models of CPD for early years staff, which are being used in different areas. Participants have brought their learning and influence from the learning community to others groups that they are involved with and this has influenced policy.				
A number of key initiatives have emerged particularly around supports for the Early Years sector including mentoring supports, however experience form these projects were not taken into account in the design of new national quality support service.				
Better understanding at national level of how logistical issues on the ground affect data collection which is important for analysis and findings.				

Notes: Based on Evaluation Questionnaire. Summary of Text Answers to Q6.1-6.5 at end-point assessment. 1=no outcomes; 5=many outcomes.

Table 36: Overall, do you think the outcomes of the Learning Community have been worth the time and effort spent on this aspect of NEYAI?

Question	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median
6.5 Overall, do you think the outcomes of the learning community have been worth the time and effort spent on this aspect of NEYAI?	2	5	3.8	4
Text				
Yes – it was necessary to have the support of the other NEYAI projects and to know what was happening with the other projects – The LC was also necessary to get updates about the National Evaluation				
Yes – certainly worthwhile – but with the caveat about proven outcomes and social return on investment.				
Definitely form a Pobal perspective, not least because it gave us an opportunity to deepen the relationship with the people from the projects and to become more familiar with the detail and operations of their local work. It also imparted a sense of a collective effort with Pobal as an equal participant rather than a funder with ‘power’.				
On the most part as a collaborative initiative the learning community helps keep everyone connected and sharing.				
For all of my whining (!), yes I do. It was a platform that helped to create a sense of identity among groups that are essentially heterogeneous. We may all work in the same sector but, as the LC clearly demonstrated, there are many different ethos, organisational learning cultures and objectives at play.				
I feel that the learning community as a concept is very important however needed to be given more thought and planning within the context of NEYAI. I am not sure the outcomes of the learning community was worth the time and effort spent on it.				
I think it was worth it in terms of feeling part of something bigger, getting to know people in Pobal, evaluators and project personnel at a personal level, sharing ideas etc.				
The outcomes from the LC are modest and not so visible but without the LC, there would have been even greater challenges in implementing the national evaluation which has generated such interesting findings. The collective approach generated useful dialogue, offered peer support and learning and strengthened the concept of a national Initiative to inform policy and practice. It is possible that this will have left a legacy and network that can have longer term impact and traction for the concepts of child-led learning and the need to develop greater practice resourcing to achieve equal outcomes and quality.				
There was a wealth of knowledge coming into project which supported each other direct and indirectly during learning community meetings and between meetings. It facilitated a sense of belonging for projects.				
Yes It has been very worthwhile and insightful experience.				
I think that the learning community was a good idea and was worth the time and effort. It was the first of its kind and I think that a lot of leaning can come out it. It is also influencing the development of the ABC learning community. It may have been over ambitious in its aims but I think that a lot has been achieved through it.				
Learning community provided a space for the projects to meet and link into and highlight the importance of the initiatives particularly to re enforce that this was part of an overall national initiative. The learning community maintained that focus and brought the projects into that space which can be lost at a local level.				

Notes: Based on Evaluation Questionnaire. Summary of Text Answers to Q6.1-6.5 at end-point assessment. 1=no, not worth it; 3=not sure; 5=yes, well worth it

9 Concluding Comments

Table 37: Do you have any other comments about the Learning Community?

Text
None apart from the fact that it was a much better engagement with Pobal than with the subventions and the capital grants. A model for the future?
One of the main and important opportunities that the LC provided was for the evaluator to present the evaluation findings on an ongoing basis and to update the local groups. Given the initial tensions that existed between local and national evaluation etc. this worked very well in building the relationship so that by the time the final evaluation findings were presented there was acceptance, acknowledgement and positivism, especially about the legacy piece to the sector.
I always enjoyed the meetings and hope this kind of approach continues.
I think that all nationally-funded initiatives should have an LC as a pre-requisite. I hope that our experience, for example, will help shape the ABC learning community as they learn from what we did well and where we fell down.
The Learning Community reflects an almost 'old fashioned' approach to support peer learning interspersed with 'expert' inputs and collective analysis of issues and trends. Pobal should use this community development type approach more...as indeed it used to....to avoid the extreme individualisation of work and 'beneficiaries' but it must be reasonably well resourced and requires skilled facilitation. It offers a very good sounding board and allows projects to develop a programme view and the possibility of two-way communication.
It was very beneficial for work in the County Childcare Committee regarding items that linked to its work.
Suggestions for how to develop a Learning Community for the ABC Initiative have been based on NEYAI
Families are really struggling at the moment and essential supports are lacking. I hope that this valuable research will be heard and help inform policy makers to add supports rather than take them away from take them away.
Thanks to Bernie, Emily, Siobhan and Nuala for all the work they put it into it. I think that the learning community was a success and a far richer place because of it. In fact, they were the glue that held the group together and gave coherence to the work. They were also very inclusive, giving each project the opportunity to get involved in planning the learning community meetings and other learning community activities.
Thanks for your time in organising them, at times I think that everyone had their own busy agendas and forgot about being part of a learning community however it was nice to meet up with others especially similar projects to hear their experiences.

**7.1 These comments could include other insights you may have about the experience of attending the learning community, how it relates to other parts of your work, or any suggestions you may have about its future.*

Notes: Based on Evaluation Questionnaire. Summary of Text Answers to Q7.1 at end-point assessment.



government supporting communities



The National Early Years Access Initiative 2010-2014

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