

PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE

CAN WE IDENTIFY CHILDREN AT BIRTH WHO ARE AT-RISK OF BEHAVIOURAL & EMOTIONAL DIFFICULTIES WHEN STARTING SCHOOL ?



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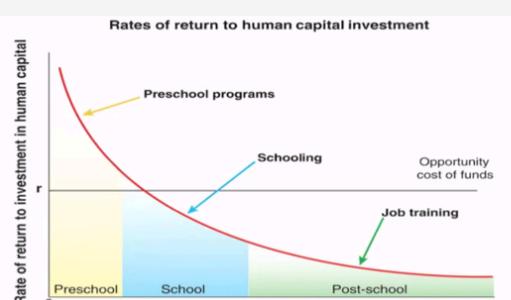
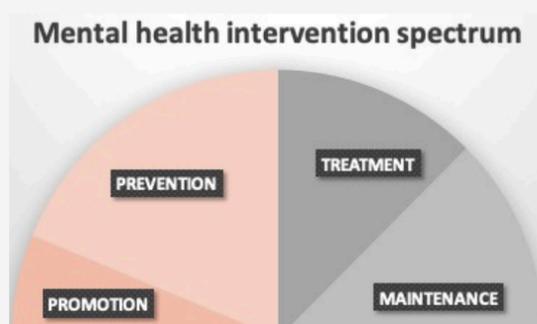
Childhood mental health is a public health concern due to its prevalence, early onset & impact on the child, family & community. A significant portion of children receive no intervention despite having poor mental health.

WHY ?



One in six children between 2-8 years have a diagnosed mental or behavioural disorder, more than half of whom are severely impacted

The World Health Organisation (2004) has asserted that **prevention** is the only sustainable approach to reducing the burden of illness associated with poor mental health.



Interventions in the first 3 years of life have enduring effects across the life course & early intervention is the best value for money. But the health service suffers from catching up with clinical problems rather than using data to predict & steer developmental outcomes.

HOW?

Equitable access based on **NEED**

Sláintecare.
Right Care. Right Place. Right Time.

WHO?

But how do we identify who is most at-risk **BEFORE** they display difficulties?



RISK PREDICTION

A **risk** score can be calculated by combining 10 non-invasive, routinely collected characteristics known at birth, making every contact count.



In pairs of children (one with & one without a difficulty), this model assigned a higher predicted score at birth to the child who subsequently experienced difficulties at 5-years in 67% of cases.



First 5 aims to improve the early identification of mental health difficulties among babies and families, and to provide access to mental health supports and services. This model accurately predicted the mental health outcomes of 5-year olds correctly for 78.8% of the population at birth.

The use of risk calculators requires actionable public policy reform aimed at facilitating EVERY child's chance to thrive & be mentally well.

IDENTIFYING the risk of later mental health difficulties at birth could help to direct those who may benefit from **preventative** support earlier.

REFERENCES

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