

Improving outcomes for children in the island of Ireland

an investment strategy

dartington **social research** unit



outcomes



1

The work began in 2005. The goal is to secure better outcomes for children in the island of Ireland.

It involves making a demonstrable improvement to children's health and education and increasing their sense of belonging in their home communities.

community

2

Investments are being made in what are called **community engagement** sites.

Supported communities are likely to be **economically disadvantaged** and to have a child population of between 3,000 and 7,000.

The people in each community work together to design, implement and evaluate a strategy to improve outcomes for their children.

Strategies usually include between five and ten new services as well as innovative **ideas about integration**.

Each strategy is designed to improve outcomes over a ten-year period. Average annual investment is in the region of **5m**.

innovation

3

Investments are also being made in **innovation sites**. Here a community or voluntary organisation will design a new service or adapt a proven model with the goal of improving outcomes for children across a wide geographical area.

For example, the **Clondalkin Partnership** has developed the **Incredible Years** parenting programme for use in schools in several counties.

Generally speaking, the work of innovation sites takes between three and five years, including evaluation. A typical annual investment will be **1m**.

design

4

The work of the community engagement and innovation sites is supported by experts in **strategy development**, **service design**, manual preparation and **evaluation**. The methods they have developed for the Irish context have wider relevance and will be published. They are described in a separate presentation.

services

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5

In the first five years of the investment cycle, the expert collaboration with the community engagement sites and innovation sites is expected to result in the design, implementation and evaluation of between **35 and 50 new services**.

If it proves successful, this activity will make the island of Ireland a focal point for development of children's services in the European Union.

outputs

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The planning work in the community engagement and innovation sites results in **hypotheses** about the best way to improve child outcomes. These hypotheses have been tested.

Every community engagement site strategy and new service is being rigorously evaluated.

Unless there are strong ethical or practical reasons for not doing so, the evaluation of new services makes use of **randomised control trials** – the most effective measure for detecting any impact on outcomes.

intermediaries

Before these investments were made, there was little rigorous evaluation of innovations in children's services in the island of Ireland.

The level of investment is intended to **improve the capacity of Irish organisations** to support the planning work, undertake rigorous evaluations, give sites continuous technical assistance and disseminate the findings.

dissemination

Some of the work of the community engagement and innovation sites will succeed; some of it may fail.

dissemination

Dissemination and advocacy organisations are being encouraged to disseminate the results of the investment in the community engagement and innovation sites.

The goal is to secure the widespread application of proven models and to decommission the less successful ones.

government

Wider application of the lessons learned depends on the strength of the collaboration with **central government, health board purchasers** of services, schools and other **children's services agencies**.

Central government is beginning to invest in the programme in the Republic of Ireland. The engagement with health, social care and education agencies is getting stronger in the North and the South.

evaluation

The success of the investments will become clear from the results of:

- major longitudinal studies in both jurisdictions
- the analysis of child indicators collected by central governments
- the results of an annual audit of need among children representative of the populations of the 32 counties
- the rigorous evaluation of the new services.

Some of these data will be subject to meta-analysis by Nobel laureate James Heckman of the University of Chicago.

outcomes

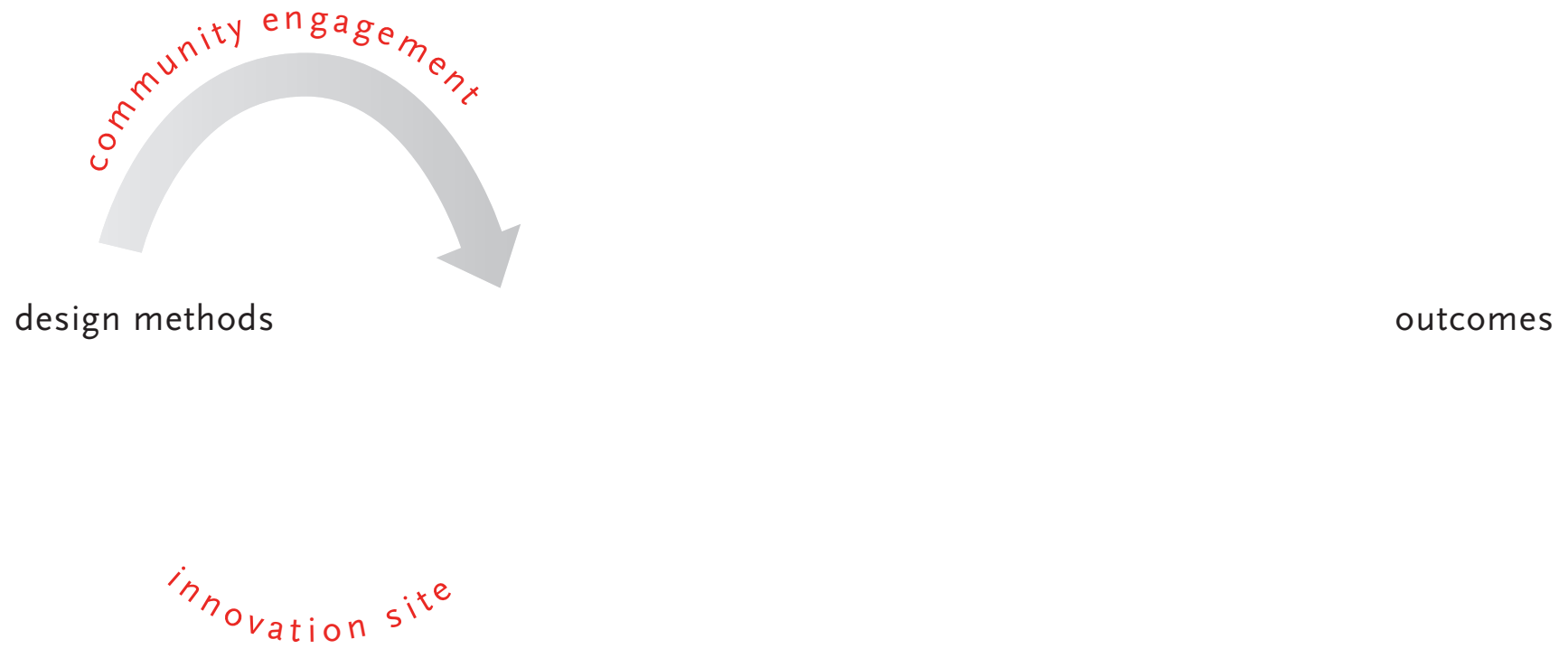
community engagement

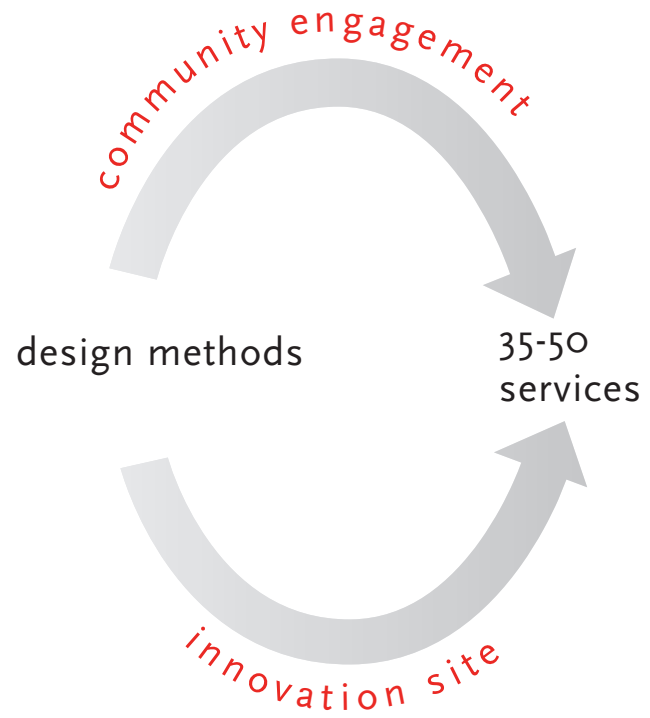
outcomes

community engagement

innovation site

outcomes





outcomes

