“Two of the girls in our setting completed the Healthy Ireland Smart Start programme recently and both said it was one of the most enjoyable, informative and very well delivered programmes they have taken part in, both of them loved it. It’s good to know that there are some enjoyable courses out there.”

“Staff were very enthusiastic about attending the training and that they are bringing back fantastic learning already.”

“We really enjoyed doing the Smart Start programme, and found the information and knowledge we received very beneficial to the day to day running of the Nursery.”

“We continuously strive to maintain and improve the quality of the Childhood Care and Education in our Nursery. We find that attending and working on programmes such as Smart Start we can keep ourselves updated and informed on best practice.”

“Previously, we would have talked generally about Oral Hygiene, but since attending the Smart Start Programme we now have a greater appreciation for the importance of Children learning about Oral Hygiene at a young age and have incorporated it into our planning.”

“As a result of our training on the Smart Start programme, we feel we have increased our promotion on health with both the children and their parents. We have always had and continue to have great awareness of health promotion through our entire daily routine but doing this programme has broadened our awareness.”

“We write a summary of the child’s day on the whiteboard for the parents to read every day. We outline the different areas of development covered as well as the Highscope Key Developmental Indicators. We now add the healthy aspects of the activities and experiences of the children to this summary for parents every day.”

“We got so much out of the emotional well-being/literacy. The books which we received went down an absolute treat. The children were aware of feeling happy or sad so introducing all the other emotions was fantastic. We now have an Emotions Tree which the children use each morning before they start their day. It really gets the children to think about how they are feeling and the feelings of the other children and they now help each other by suggesting “a kind person could help the sad person feel better”. All the children now feel secure in the way they are feeling.”

“Our awareness of oral health has really transformed also. One of the parents of a child attending the centre is a dental hygienist and she was kind enough to come and visit the children. She spoke to the children and demonstrated brushing teeth with a giant set of teeth and the importance of oral health. During lunch time, we all discuss the different foods we have, which ones are good for our teeth and which ones are not so good. Our full day care children also now brush their teeth every day after lunch. Every full day care child has a toothbrush and tooth paste on site.”

“We have a healthy eating policy in place. Parents are asked not to send sweets, crisps or snack food to the service. This includes birthday treats. If there is a birthday, parents provide a variety of fruit and we are only delighted to make a “Fruit Monster” for everyone to share.”

“We have our own chef who cooks nutritious home-made meals for the full day care children. Our menus are planned and critiqued by the directors with healthy nutrition in mind at all times. From our training on the Smart Start programme it has really opened our eyes to the sugar content in a lot of children’s foods. That particular workshop was shocking. Now when we are ordering our snack foods for the children from Tesco we take note of the hidden sugars in the snacks.”

“We feel we have gained so much from doing the Smart Start programme. We have gained so much information on acknowledging emotional well-being with the children. We have passed all of our learning to our parents and feel if we work together and acknowledge our children’s feelings and thoughts, it will help them become responsible and competent adults. By participating in the Smart Start Programme, it has regenerated and reminded us as a team of the importance of acknowledging and developing all aspects of children’s health and well-being. We aim for high quality. We gained so much and feel every service in the country would benefit from this training.”

“Not only have we made significant improvements in all areas of health and well-being but we now know how to measure, assess and structure our planning and implementation in a way that will meet the guidelines for best practice in health and well-being promotion. We have completely transformed certain areas of H&W and are in the process of improving the areas that we feel still need work. We have become more aware of the inclusion and embodiment of H&W in our long and short term planning and assessment and we are conscious of including the ethos of holistic health in our day to day activities. Our parental involvement has been fantastic this year too as most parents have really gotten involved in our initiatives such as energy walks, family fun runs, healthy eating policies, walk to school Wednesday and hand washing champions.”

“The training was very good and I believe with this we will have a Healthy Future for our Young People. Well Done!”

“We found the course very interesting and informative.”

“Fantastic programme and worked very well within our setting.”

“We found we were completing a lot of what was being done already but there were some very good ideas to improve even further and it was good to have some reassurance that we are doing good. We always like to improve on anything that we can. The programme/classes were very interesting and you would always take something new away”

“This course has increased the awareness of team members in health promotion topics and has enhanced the service’s existing curriculum to include new ideas especially in the area of well-being and emotional literacy.”