



An Roinn Leanaí
agus Gnóthaí Óige
Department of Children
and Youth Affairs

EARLY YEARS

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latest
UPDATE
from our Minister

Dr. Katherine Zappone
Minister for Children and Youth Affairs



Dear Colleagues,

September 2019

Welcome to the latest edition of our e-bulletin which is intended to keep you up to date on progress across the Early Years Division in my Department. As always, we continue to welcome any comments you have or any suggestions on topics you would like us to cover in future editions.

Firstly, I would like to focus on the RTÉ Prime Time Investigates programme. I know this programme was deeply distressing and shocking to watch. I also know that what we saw is not representative of the sector.



Tusla's Early Year Inspectorate has assured myself and my Department that the vast majority of early learning and care services are compliant with regulations central to the protection and wellbeing of children. It is however crucial that we stand up against incidences of unacceptable practices such as those seen in the programme. This is a requirement under Children First legislation. If you have a concern that any child is being abused, you should contact your local Tusla Social Work service. If you have a more general concern regarding your service, it is recommended that in the first instance you bring your concern to the attention of your manager or the service owner. You may also wish to bring the concern to the attention of Tusla's Unsolicited Information office.

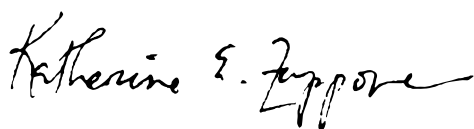
I am committed to continuing to work with each of you to deliver accessible, affordable and high quality early learning and care and school-age childcare for children and their families, while also creating a rewarding and sustainable sector for practitioners. I express my gratitude to you for continuing to support young children in their early development in what has been a turbulent number of weeks for our sector.

I am delighted to say that we have launched the draft Childminding Action Plan for public consultation. The Childminding Action Plan outlines proposals to extend supports and regulation to all paid, non-relative childminders, with a phased approach to reforms. The consultation includes a call for [submissions \(Irish version\)](#) and an [online survey \(Irish version\)](#). A number of focus groups with childminders will also take place over the coming weeks. The consultation is open to childminders, parents, other stakeholders and anyone interested in childminding to share their views.

Preparations are now in the final stage for the roll out of the National Childcare Scheme (NCS) in late October 2019. [Phase 2 training sessions](#) are now live on Eventbrite and I would encourage you to attend these sessions to learn more.

Alternatively, if you are interested in the new Scheme and would like to learn more please contact your local [City or County Childcare Committee](#) who will be happy to provide information and training. I would ask that you continue to encourage parents to get their verified MyGovID set up to support the application process.

Finally, this is a time of transition for many children starting in the Early Childhood Care and Education programme and for lots it may be their first big transition from home. I would like to wish all those starting with a new group of children the very best on their new adventure!



Katherine E. Zappone T.D.

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs



QUALITY

School Age Childcare

Childcare services for school-age children must now register with Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. School-age childcare services have not previously been subject to registration, so this is a significant step forward in ensuring quality school-age childcare.



Services must register their service with Tusla if their primary purpose is to care for children where their parents are unavailable.

All services that currently provide childcare for school-age children **must have** applied for registration and are urged to start this process immediately. New services must apply for registration at least 3 months before opening

School-Age Childcare services that are registered will also be eligible to apply to participate in the forthcoming National Childcare Scheme (NCS). It is particularly important for any **standalone** School-Age Childcare service wishing to take part in the NCS and which has outstanding information required by Tusla to furnish this as soon as possible to ensure registration in time for the NCS opening.

If you need support in your application preparation or submitting supplementary information please contact your local City/County Childcare Committee (see www.myccc.ie for details).

Draft Childminding Action Plan launched

Childminding Action Plan public consultation

The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs launched the draft childminding action plan on 29 August 2019 for public consultation. The call for submissions and an online survey are open and available in both English and Irish on the DCYA website **until Thursday, 10 October 2019**. The draft action plan can also be viewed by following the link.



The public consultation will also include focus groups with childminders and an open policy debate. The overall objective of the draft action plan is to improve access to high quality and affordable early learning and care and school-age childcare through childminding. We would ask that you please encourage participation in the consultation process by communicating the link to the online survey and call for submissions on your websites and social media to ensure that we have as wide a consultation process as possible.





Minister Katherine Zappone at the launch of the Draft Childminding Action Plan in DCYA



Pictured at the launch event were: (l to r) Margaret McHutcheon, Liz Butler, Dr. Katherine Zappone, T.D., Minister for Children and Youth Affairs and Anne Ryan.



AIM Applications

The AIM application process for the 2019/2020 preschool year opened in May and will remain open throughout the preschool year.

Visit aim.gov.ie to find out more.



Publication of the AIM Rules

The AIM Rules for the 2019/2020 ECCE programme year were published in July 2019. It is hoped that you will find the Rules to be a useful resource. The Rules are referenced in the ECCE contract and providers are asked to familiarise themselves with the document, which can be accessed on the [AIM](http://aim.gov.ie) website.



The AIM Rules document aims to give clear guidance on policies and procedures that are already in place. In addition, preschool managers and practitioners should note that there are a small number of changes to the rules for 2019/2020. These changes are outlined below.

Inclusion Coordinators and new LINC Graduates Save the date – 31st October deadline for applications for additional capitation

From the 2019/2020 ECCE programme year, it will no longer be possible for additional capitation payments for Inclusion Coordinators to be backdated to the beginning of the programme year if the application is submitted late in the year.

As a LINC graduate, you become an Inclusion Coordinator when you and your preschool manager sign and submit the Inclusion Coordinator declaration. Once you have successfully completed the course, don't delay – complete and sign the Inclusion Coordinator declaration and submit it to Pobal via PIP to ensure that your setting will benefit from the additional capitation as soon as possible.



To support services to adjust to this rule change, for the 2019/2020 programme year, the additional capitation can be backdated to the beginning of the programme year provided that the application form reaches Pobal by 31 October 2019. This will also accommodate new LINC graduates whose graduation verification will only reach Pobal by late September.

Backdating of AIM Level 7 additional capitation payments

In the original AIM policy, it was stated that there would be no backdating of AIM Level 7 payments. Some backdating was allowed in the early stages of AIM's implementation due to administrative delays and to allow systems to become established. AIM is now entering its fourth year of operation and the application systems are well established. Therefore, DCYA has reverted to the original policy of not allowing backdating of AIM Level 7 payments.



Providers should note that, as outlined in the AIM Rules, where a child has very complex needs or complex medical needs that mean he or she could not reasonably be expected to attend the preschool service for an observation visit without AIM targeted supports, Better Start has discretion to approve AIM Level 7 support in advance of the observation visit.



The Rules also provide for greater flexibility around attendance for children in receipt of AIM Level 7 support – see page 28 of the AIM Rules document for more details.

AIM Sensory Processing and Early Learning



Forbairt Cállocht
Luathbhláanta Náisiúnta
National Early Years
Quality Development

The new introductory online training programme in Sensory Processing will continue to be rolled out this preschool year – keep an eye on PIP for further information from Better Start.

Workforce Development Plan

Work on the Workforce Development Plan (WDP) has begun and updates will be provided in the e-bulletin over the coming months. The aim of the WDP is to establish role profiles, career pathways, and levels of qualification, as well as policies to support professionalisation. It will encompass Early Learning and Care, School-Age Childcare, centre based services and home based services (childminding).

A Stakeholder Working Group will work alongside the steering group and will be consulted extensively throughout the development of the plan.

Critical to the work of the plan is a consultation and communications strategy which will be developed shortly and will involve extensive consultation with those working in the sector at different stages in the development of the plan.

POLICY AND STRATEGY

Announcement of Expert Group to develop new Funding Model for Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare

Minister Zappone recently announced the formal initiation of a project to begin the development of new Funding Model for Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare designed to address issues of affordability, quality, sustainability and inclusion. The intention is that the new Funding Model will operate alongside the existing major funding streams of ECCE and the National Childcare Scheme when it comes into operation shortly.



In order to advise on this work, the Minister has appointed an Expert Group to lead the project. The Expert Group will be chaired by Michael Scanlan, former Secretary General at the Department of Health, who led the Department of Health and Children when the Office of Minister for Children and Youth Affairs was under its remit during which time the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme was established. The group includes the following national and international experts:

- Professor Edward Melhuish, Oxford University, and renowned international research expert on quality in Early Learning and Care
- Professor Eva Lloyd, University of East London, highly specialised in the niche field of funding of Early Learning and Care
- Tove Mogstad Slinde, Norwegian Department of Kindergartens and Schools, former Chair of OECD Early Childhood Education and Care Network
- Dr Tim Callan, former Research Professor at the Economic and Social Research Institute
- Dr Rory O'Donnell, former Director of the National Economic and Social Council
- Officials from the Departments of Children and Youth Affairs (Bernie McNally, Dr Anne-Marie Brooks), Education and Skills and Public Expenditure and Reform

The Expert Group has been tasked with agreeing funding principles in consultation with stakeholders, reviewing the existing approach to funding, examining different models internationally and making proposals for new ways to deliver funding to the Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare sector. For example, the group will look at how to structure public funding to support better working conditions for staff and sustainability for providers. A research partner will support the work of the Expert Group by delivering a series of evidence reviews and research papers and leading a process of consultation and engagement. The first meeting of the Expert Group will take place at the end of October. Further information is available [here](#):

OPERATIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) Training

The General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) came into force on the 25th of May 2018. All organisations are responsible for ensuring that they are compliant with all relevant legislation, including GDPR. Further information can be found on the Data Protection Commission [website](#).

In response to concerns within the Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare sector relating to GDPR readiness, the Department has made complimentary online GDPR training available for all services to support them in meeting the Data Protection obligations. This training is designed and delivered by iHasco. Further information, including the link to the training site, can be found on Pobal's Childcare Collaboration Portal.



This online training is offered as a support for services in relation to GDPR obligations and provides a high-level overview of the principles of GDPR. Services will need to assess what further actions they may need to take to ensure they are fully informed of their responsibilities in relation to GDPR in an Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare context

Did you Know?

Anyone with an interest can sign up to receive this e-bulletin by contacting dcyaey_comms@dcya.gov.ie with your name, organisation and e-mail address.

PROJECTS

The National Childcare Scheme

Nationwide Training Programme

Phase 2 of the National Childcare Scheme nationwide training programme started on the 19th of August. Over 300 sessions have already been conducted nationwide. Sessions run until the end of October and places can be booked via Eventbrite on <https://ncs.gov.ie/provider>. To date **over 3,800** places have been booked for these sessions.



Did you Know?

For more information on the National Childcare Scheme visit www.ncs.gov.ie or contact us at ncs@dcya.gov.ie

We have a dedicated [Frequently Asked Questions for Providers](#).

Find us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/nationalchildcarescheme/>

Parents can also phone **The National Childcare Scheme Parent Support Centre** on **(01) 906 8530**. Which is open Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm to ask specify questions regarding the new scheme.



EARLY YEARS EDUCATION POLICY UNIT

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) – participants sought for Irish language pilot project

The Department of Education and Skills is looking to select two early learning and care settings to participate in a pilot project which will run over three years with the aim to improve learner competence, confidence and disposition to Irish in English-medium schools and early learning and care settings. The approach being piloted (CLIL) provides for the delivery of aspects of the curriculum through a language that is not the medium of instruction in the school. The settings must be participating in the ECCE programme and implementing the Aistear curriculum framework.



As part of the project, CPD resources and training will be provided to participating settings. If you are interested in learning more about this project and applying to participate, you will find the application form and further information at the following [link](#).

FINANCE GOVERNANCE AND REFORM

Case Management Process

The Department appreciates the essential services provided by Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare providers across the country and is aware of the challenges they sometimes face. We are committed to doing what we can to help services facing challenges to become sustainable through preventative, early, and urgent interventions.

For this reason, the Department oversees a Case Management process through which local CCCs and Pobal work together to assess and provide support to services in difficulty. This can include help with completing and interpreting analysis of staff ratios, fee setting and cash flow, as well as more specialised advice and support appropriate to individual circumstances.



While both Community and Private services play a vital role in their communities, financial supports are currently targeted at the Community not for profit Sector. It is unfortunately not possible for the Department to provide direct financial assistance to Private childcare services at present beyond the usual scheme capitation, capital grants etc. Financial supports that may be available for community services facing certain challenges are accessed through the Case Management process. This involves an operational review of the service, incorporating a financial assessment performed by Pobal.

Pobal co-ordinate the overall case management process, with the local CCC administering initial case management assistance. All services who require support should contact their local CCC immediately.



As you are aware, CCS has been discontinued and services are being given the option of registering children on the National Childcare Scheme (NCS) from late October or remaining on CCSP for the 2019-2020 programme year however no new children can be registered on CCSP after the commencement of NCS. Please keep an eye on PIP for further updates. Consequently, the submission of Financial Impact Reports (FIR) under CCS is no longer mandatory. However, the Department would like to urge all community services to continue or begin to complete and submit FIRs to Pobal going forward. These returns provide essential information that allows CCCs and Pobal to identify and help services to resolve problems. They also act as an informative tool for services in the effective planning of their future financials.

Consequently, the FIRs are a key component of the assessment process for accessing sustainability funding. Services which continue to keep up to date FIRs and encounter a sustainability issue will subsequently experience an expedited funding request process as Pobal Case Management will be better equipped to assess the service's request for funding.

Finally, we are currently waiting for the conclusion of two projects; the Sustainability Review and the review of Financial, Governance and Accountability Requirements. The outputs and outcomes from both of these will provide us with material that will inform the Department's next steps in continuing to provide quality Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare to as many children as possible.

IN OTHER NEWS...

Be Winter Ready

The 2019/2020 Winter Ready campaign will be launching shortly. We would encourage everyone to visit www.winterready.ie to enable us all, as individuals and as communities, to be prepared for the winter months ahead.



Leagan Gaeilge

Más maith leat an ríomh-fheasachán seo a fháil i nGaeilge, cuir ríomhphost chuig dcyaey_comms@dcya.gov.ie le d'ainm, ainm na seirbhíse agus do sheoladh ríomhphoist.

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Early Years Division at the Department of Children and Youth Affairs

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