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**Report on the Working Conditions of the Early Years Education and Care
Sector 2017**

An Comhchoiste um Leanaí agus Gnóthaí Óige

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CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

In early 2017, the Joint Committee on Children and Youth Affairs decided to examine the impact of the 'Early Years Education' Policy on the sector. The Committee agreed that Deputy Kathleen Funchion should act as Rapporteur on this issue and prepare a report on this subject for the Committee's consideration. At its meeting on 12 July 2017 the Joint Committee adopted Deputy Funchion's Report.

The Committee recognise that high quality early childhood education and care is crucial for the education, welfare and development of children. In this regard, the importance of the staff working in this sector cannot be underestimated. Given the significance of the work which they undertake, it is crucial that staff working in these areas are valued and supported in their roles.

The rationale behind the report was to examine a sector which is crucial to children and their development in order to identify the concerns facing staff in these services and to explore how they could be addressed. In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of these issues, employment conditions, wages and other challenges facing this sector were examined. These aspects of the report should be of interest and value to other Committees given the issues they raise.

On behalf of the Committee, I wish to acknowledge the work done by Deputy Funchion in bringing this matter before the Committee and undertaking this study with such commitment.



Alan Farrell T.D.

Chairman

26 July 2017



RAPPORTEUR INTRODUCTION – KATHLEEN FUNCHION TD

National and international evidence suggests that high quality early childhood education and care is beneficial to young children at the foundation stage of their development. This research further suggests that the provision of high quality early childhood education and care is dependent on quality interactions between the early years staff and the children they engage with. As per the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) *Education at a Glance 2012: OECD Indicators* and Start Strong's 2014 report *'Childcare' Business or Profession*, poor quality early years education and care, in fact, harms a child's development. This provides even more compelling evidence that the immediate improvement of working conditions and salaries of those working in the sector are absolutely necessary in order to achieve the quality of education and care which is expected for our young children.

Currently, there is a crisis regarding staff in the early years sector. There is an evident increasing burden of administration work for staff without commensurate adequate time, pay or resources to deal with these factors. This is resulting in mounting stress and pressure on staff who are working at the same time with very young children. The reality of poor wages, along with many staff having to sign on for social welfare during the summer months, makes it almost impossible for many to stay in the sector; even though many are qualified to degree level.

The *Early Years Sector Profile 2016-2017* (Pobal 2016) indicates that a total of 20,823 staff were at work across 3,402 childcare services. 18,906 worked with children while 1,817 made up the ancillary staff. The profile also demonstrates that 98% of the staff working with children and 84% of the ancillary staff in all childcare services were female – clearly a mostly female - gendered profession.

The *National Skills Bulletin 2016* produced by SOLAS¹ looked at the high level of staff turnover in the sector. It found that, at occupational level, care workers (including those in early year's education and care) formed a category for which change of employer was the most frequent. Pobal (2016) *Early Years Sector Profile 2016-2017* showed that, of

¹ SOLAS (2016) *National Skills Bulletin 2016*.
Available at: <http://www.solas.ie/SolasPdfLibrary/NationalSkillsBulletin2016.pdf>

the total 20,823 staff profiled, 32% of them had worked in the sector for less than 2 years. The Executive Summary of *Doing the Sums – The Real Cost of Providing Childcare*² found that 86% of service providers believed that problems recruiting and retaining staff would impact on the viability of their services, while 57% of workers leaving the sector cited poor pay as the reason for departing.

While these figures do point towards serious challenges for the workforce, it is important to acknowledge that positive work has been carried out to date by Government in relation to:

- improving the quality of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) e.g. introduction of the Learner Fund;
- providing supports made available through Better Start and Access and Inclusion Model (AIM);
- committing €17.5 million towards administration/non-contact time;
- setting minimum qualification requirements; and
- introducing of the Department of Education and Skills inspectorate and enhancing regulations.

It is a welcome step that higher qualifications are incentivised in the free pre-school scheme 'The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)', which provides higher capitation for higher qualifications. A similar approach should be taken in the Affordable Childcare Scheme (ACS) – otherwise the draw of higher qualified staff to the free pre-school scheme will continue.

While many of the above mentioned policies have impacted positively on quality in certain areas, an unintentional consequence has been the creation of new challenges, which compound the current crisis that exists for the workforce.

Quality demands consistency. If we are to create a high quality education and care sector that delivers to all children equally, then we must ensure staff are incentivised to enter the sector in the first instance with prospects of a decent quality of living and

²Early Childhood Ireland (March 2017) *Doing the Sums – The Real Cost of Providing Childcare*. Available at: <https://www.earlychildhoodireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/DoingTheSumsReport.pdf>

career once working within it. Once entered into the sector, we must support high quality educators to remain and progress their careers in the way they choose with financial security.

Early years educators care for our youngest children at their most vulnerable and quickly developing stages of life. We must recognise and respect their valuable contribution to society and create stable working terms and conditions which reflect their vital work which so many of us rely on.

Kathleen Funchion

Kathleen Funchion TD

Rapporteur

26 July 2017



1. INTRODUCTION

The primary purpose of this report of the Joint Committee on Children and Youth Affairs is firstly, to focus attention on the poor working conditions and below average pay scales of all those working in the early years sector and, secondly, to highlight the major areas of concern currently facing the sector in both rural and urban services across all provinces.

In order to compile this report, the Rapporteur held an extensive series of national outreach meetings with staff working in the sector, with providers both community and private who serve in the sector, as well as several County Childcare Committee representatives. Finally, there was significant engagement with trade unions and their early years representatives who are conducting on-going nation-wide campaigns which address many of the issues raised throughout this report.

2. POLICY RELATED ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

i) Fragmented Policy Implementation

The Early Childhood sector in Ireland has been subject to constant policy change for almost two decades. Historically, it has acted as a fragmented sector with a multitude of actors following diverse practices and policy agendas. In 2004, the *OECD* found that, in Ireland “*Significant energies and funding will need to be invested in the field to create a system in tune with the needs of a full employment economy, and with new understandings of how young children develop and learn.*”³

In 2015 a European Commission report noted that, in Ireland:

The scattered provisions for childcare support are complicated and difficult to navigate. The shortcomings relate mainly to a combination of low payment rates for childcare providers, limited knowledge of the scheme, and practical obstacles to accessing after-school care. In an attempt to increase the quality of services, a new National Quality Support Service will commence in 2015 with a limited budget and small staff. No budget was allocated to up-skill childcare staff beyond minimum qualifications. Childcare programmes generally fail to have a significant impact on increasing access to affordable and quality childcare, particularly for low-income families.⁴

³ OECD Directorate for Education April 2004, *ECEC Policy, Country Note for Ireland*. Available at: <http://www.oecd.org/ireland/34425332.pdf>

⁴ European Commission (2015) *Commission Staff Working Document. Country Report Ireland 2015*. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/csr2015/cr2015_ireland_en.pdf

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children & Young People 2014-2020 was launched in April 2014. This framework represents the first overarching national children's policy framework spanning children and young people (0 – 24 years). It adopts a whole-government approach and the intention was to underpin consistent strategies in the areas of early years and youth. Despite the fact that we are currently at the midway point of this framework, the strategy for early years has still not been drafted for consultation and implementation.

In the absence of this strategy, in July 2015 the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) published the *Report of Inter-Departmental Working Group: Future Investment in Childcare in Ireland*. The purpose of this report was to identify and assess policies and future options for increasing the quality, accessibility (including supply) and affordability of early years and school-age care and education services in Ireland. This presented spending options for the DCYA that some stakeholders believe has contributed to fragmented policy implementation.

The DCYA announced its intention to tackle some of these challenges in Budget 2017 with plans for rolling out the new Affordable Childcare Scheme (ACS). That scheme is still in its initial stages. It is the view of the early years sector that significant further consultation and improved communication is needed with staff and service providers if proposed measures and schemes are to succeed. While this scheme addresses issues relating to affordability for parents it does not address issues such as service sustainability and adequate remuneration for the workforce tasked with delivering the scheme nor has it agreed steps to incentivise quality. It has also been expressed that further funds need to be provided for the additional administrative work needed to prepare and roll out the new scheme. Also, this new money should be separate and additional to that in the already committed non-contact time fund. Non-contact time refers to the time required for planning, documenting, preparing and reviewing all aspects of the curriculum to be delivered to the children in the service. This is separate to the administrative requirements of the service which include engaging with PIP, the online Programmes Implementation Platform; maintenance of records in relation to finances, HR, governance, engagement with outside agencies, etc.

ii) Need for Independent Cost Review of Services

Throughout the outreach meetings, it was consistently emphasised that the DCYA needs to conduct a realistic analysis of what it costs to operate a high-quality early education and care service. This was also highlighted by stakeholders. Service providers, both rural and urban, stated that the current capitation rates provided to services are based on out-of-date costings. This in turn forces many services to operate at 'break-even' point,

while trying to cut costs through staff wages and administrative sources. It is also common for community services to fundraise during personal time in order to keep the doors open.

It is therefore clear that while some services are operating at a reasonable profit, significant numbers are struggling financially. Many are barely surviving. There needs to be a full cost analysis by the DCYA with significant input from the Department of Finance in order to inform both policy development and future funding proposals. Policy can then be developed from evidence-based information and be provided by accurate figures. This will, in turn, improve the potential success of new schemes. Ultimately, it will create more favourable and sustainable working conditions for all those employed in the sector and improve the quality of services for children.

The independent cost and sustainability review should encompass the identification and assessment of stress factors impacting on the early childhood services. This review should distinguish between the cost of providing a 0-3 year's service, a pre-school service and an afterschool service. The review should also make a distinction between services where staff are on work placement activation schemes or not.

Alongside consultation with the early year's sector, the local and collective national knowledge and expertise of the City and County Childcare Committees (CCCs) would greatly inform this process in terms of local disparities for example, between community and privately managed services or the urban/rural divide. The review should address:

- Staffing – remuneration of staff in line with Occupational Role Profiles and nationally agreed pay scale. This should include remuneration for non-contact time, training and Continuing Professional Development (CPD);
- Premises – rent and rates based on community and private/urban and rural levels;
- Registration, Health and Safety, Professional Fees and Compliance– including Tusla registration;
- General running costs including maintenance, perishables and staff recruitment; and
- Stress factors to protect sustainability.

iii) The Need for 'Gender Proofing' Early Childhood Policy

The 2016 census figures show that unpaid work in Ireland is highly gendered. The majority of the citizens who perform care work for the young, the elderly, the ill, and those with additional needs are female. It is work that goes unpaid, yet it is work that is vital to the social and economic cohesion of the State. The number of unpaid carers in

2016 was 195,263. This was a rise of 8,151 from the 2011 census.⁵ It is estimated that if this cohort of people were paid even at the rate of the minimum wage, the monetary value of their work would cost 3.5 billion euro per year to the State – equivalent to 27% of the State’s health budget. It is worth noting that the same census for 2016 evidenced shocking data that there was an estimated 3,800 children aged 14 and younger providing unpaid care, of these, 1,635 were under the age of 10. It was recorded that child carers typically provided up to 2 hours caring a day (i.e. 1-14 hours per week). However, in 2016, 554 child carers reported providing in excess of this. Throughout our series of outreach meetings, it was repeatedly stated that staff feel the State is taking advantage of the early years sector’s ‘good will’. Those within the sector believe that there is a direct correlation between the figures quoted and a similar devaluing of their work with children.

The OECD has consistently echoed the belief that gender imbalance within the ECEC profession is seen to reflect deeply-held cultural beliefs about child-rearing and the roles of women and men in society. Moss (2006) also argues that gendering in the workforce in early childhood education cannot be explained in terms of low pay alone.⁶ More likely, this is a result of the combination of how the work is seen in society and how education and employment are structured in ways that reproduce gendered workforces. Again, according to the OECD, gendering reinforces the notion that child-rearing is essentially ‘women’s work’ with the traditional reflex of paying the profession less and regarding their work as being of lesser importance.

iv) The Need for an Early Years Strategy

The Early Childhood sector currently has no national strategy or timeline with proposed targets. This is contributing to the overall lack of momentum in progressing change. As stated by one practitioner, “the National Children’s Strategy expired in 2010”. Both stakeholders and practitioners are calling for consultation with the sector to develop and agree on an early years strategy so that a blueprint exists for the improvement of skills and working conditions.

In relation to the *Department of Education and Skills (2010) Workforce Development Plan*, there is a need to move away from the notion that “While issues such as the status and the terms and conditions of employment of people working in the sector are very

⁵ CSO, ‘9. Health, Disability and caring’, *Census 2016 Summary Results - Part 2*. (CSO, 2017:70) Dublin: Stationary Office, 2017 Available at: <http://cso.ie/en/csolatestnews/presspages/2017/census2016summaryresults-part2/>.

⁶ Moss, P (2006). “Structures, Understanding and Discourses: Possibilities for Re-Envisioning the Early Childhood Worker”, *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 30-41

much to the fore, they are outside the scope of this policy document.”⁴ This attitude is central to the reason why our workforce is experiencing the current crisis.

3. WORKING CONDITIONS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SECTOR

In 2014 the European Commission published a report drawn up by Member States (including Irish Government representatives) which proposed a benchmark on quality. In relation to early years education it called for:

*‘Well-qualified staff whose initial and continuing training enables them to fulfil their professional role. Recognising the ECEC workforce as professionals is key. Professional development has a huge impact on the quality of staff pedagogy and children’s outcomes. Developing common education and training programmes for all staff working in an ECEC context (pre-school teachers, assistants, educators, family day carers) helps to create a shared agenda and understanding of quality’.*⁷

The OECD (2012) identified “Improving qualifications, training and working conditions” of the early years workforce as an effective policy lever for improving quality provision in early childhood education and care.

In this context, it is crucial to note that in Ireland the number of graduates in the sector stands at 18% (Pobal, 2016) – a fraction of the 60% recommended in the Competence Requirements in Early Childhood Education and Care (CoRe Report, 2011).⁸

The International Labour Organisation published Policy Guidelines in the promotion of decent work for early childhood education personnel in 2014.⁹

⁷ European Commission (October 2014) *Proposal for key principles of a Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care, Report of the Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care under the auspices of the European Commission*. Available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/repository/education/policy/strategic-framework/archive/documents/ecec-quality-framework_en.pdf

⁸ London & Ghent. (2011) CoRe Final Report.

Available at: <https://download.ei.ie.org/Docs/WebDepot/CoReResearchDocuments2011.pdf>

⁹ILO Policy Guidelines on the promotion of decent work for early childhood education personnel Geneva, 2014.

Available at: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---sector/documents/normativeinstrument/wcms_236528.pdf

The guidelines held that:

- Base salaries and overall remuneration should reflect the importance attached to Early Childhood Educator (ECE) in relation to national income levels.
- Remuneration should be adjusted as needed to a level that provides a decent standard of living in the area of work concerned.
- Remuneration should be set at the same level as the equivalent job in primary education with similar qualifications and competency.
- Remuneration levels should correspond to the responsibilities of the ECE job as set out in job descriptions objectively defined through systematic evaluation or appraisals of work to be performed.
- Equal remuneration should be standard for men and women workers, for work of equal value.

Across the Republic of Ireland, average pay rates for workers in the ECEC sector remain starkly deficient.

Average pay rates throughout Ireland, as compiled by the Early Childhood Ireland Survey in 2016 are listed below:

Table 1:

Early Childhood Ireland (2016) Pay Rates in the Irish Early Childhood Care and Education Sector	
Role	Average Hourly Wage
Manager	€13.28
Room Leader	10.27
Early Years Educator	10.27

The Early Childhood Ireland Survey also suggests that ‘qualifications do not entitle professionals to a higher rate of pay’. An educator with Level 9 (Masters Degree) standing earns €13.28 an hour, marginally higher than Level 6 earning €11.27.

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) carried out its own survey in 2015 with equally alarming findings. The ICTU *Who Cares? Report on Childcare Costs & Practices in Ireland 2016* stresses that earnings are a function of hours worked and found that, “The operation of the ECCE scheme for only 38 weeks a year has led to a growth of

casualisation in the sector as a result of closures during the summer months, when funding for the government initiative does not apply”¹⁰

This creates precarious working conditions and part-time contracts resulting in most practitioners being forced to sign onto the Live Register for the summer months. It was highlighted during discussions with the sector that private service providers cannot sign on themselves, however, as they are viewed by the State as self-employed. This legality increases already existing financial pressures for those providers who are struggling.

While acknowledging the fact that most of the sessional services only ever offered 38-40 weeks of provision even before the ECCE Scheme was introduced in 2010, the new requirements being placed on the workforce over the 38 week period ensures that services are effectively delivering 52 weeks’ worth of requirements over the 38 weeks. Again, this is where we see the that new regulations, while positive in most instances, increase the workload for staff without commensurate financial compensation – and this is where the conflict arises.

4. AREAS OF CONCERN AS VIEWED BY EARLY YEARS PROFESSIONALS

i) Staff Shortages

Services are currently experiencing recruitment and retention difficulties because there is insufficient funding available to pay staff a wage that is commensurate with their role and ever increasing responsibilities. As evidenced previously in this report, the average wage for the profession is significantly below living wage. The CoRe Report (2011) recommends a graduate-led early year’s workforce but this recommendation cannot be fulfilled unless graduates are retained and incentivised to remain working in the sector.

Moloney & Pope (2013) found that “The issue of remuneration impacted negatively upon graduate perceptions of working within the sector. It undermined graduates’ confidence and self-esteem in relation to the value of their work?”¹¹ Unless rights in terms of adequate pay and working conditions are implemented that are reflective of levels of responsibility, qualification and experience, the challenge to retain highly qualified staff will continue.

Consequently, the early year’s profession is currently experiencing a serious crisis. It is the sector’s view that the development and adoption of agreed pay scales and

¹⁰ Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) (2016) *Who Cares? Report on Childcare Costs & Practices in Ireland*. Available at: https://www.ictu.ie/download/pdf/report_on_childcare_costs_practices_congress_2016.pdf

¹¹ Mary Moloney & Jennifer Pope (2013): Where to now for early childhood care and education (ECCE) graduates? A study of the experiences of Irish BA ECCE degree graduates, *Education 3-13: International Journal of Primary, Elementary and Early Years Education*. Available at http://www.acpireland.com/uploads/1/5/3/7/15370432/3-13_education.pdf

administration funds for all those contracted to deliver early years schemes on behalf of the government need to be tied to and ring-fenced to increased government investment for this purpose. It is also advocated that any pay scale should be linked to qualifications. With regards to retention, interviews were held with practitioners working in the sector to establish essential demands to ensure their continuing participation in the sector. There was clear consistency in answers received and the main suggestions are as follows:

- The introduction of a fair pay scale – one commensurate with qualifications, length of service and levels of further training. This pay scale must be tied to level of State investment;
- The introduction of paid CPD;
- The streamlining of inspections;
- The extension of the number of paid/operational weeks while introducing paid holiday time so that ‘signing on’ is no longer necessary. To this effect, the Association of Childhood Professionals has proposed a 48-week payment model including 40 weeks of contact with children, 4 weeks holiday pay and 4 weeks of CPD and non-contact/administrative pay. This would eventually increase to a 52-week model. However, the ACP points out the workforce cannot afford to work extra weeks at the current low level of pay, as many would then have childcare costs of their own over the summer months. These would be costs that they would be unable to afford and therefore they would be financially worse off; and
- The addressing of administrative duties incurred, by the implementation of the ACS in 2017, and additional payment for work that is not already committed in the *non-contact* time payment.

ii) Government Investment and Capitation Rates

It is widely acknowledged that the Irish government spends too little on early education in comparison to our European neighbours. Across both the European Union and the OECD countries the average expenditure on ‘early childhood education institutions’ in 2013 was 0.8% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Ireland spent just 0.1% of GDP, significantly below our European neighbours and the 1% benchmark of UNICEF.

For example, in Denmark, 74% of ECEC services for pre-school children are offered by the municipality. The remaining early education services are made up of independent

institutions that are predominantly run on a non-profit basis by associations or parents in agreement with the municipality and, therefore, they also receive public funding.¹²

Another interesting international perspective on government funding can be found in Korea, where a statutory requirement exists on the local authorities to fund a minimum level of staff development (OECD, 2006). Similarly, in Hungary, every pedagogue has the personal obligation to take 120 hours of professional development each seven-year period, again paid for by the State (OECD, 2006).

The lack of public investment in the ECEC sector in Ireland results in high costs to parents and low wages for workers. Irish parents pay some of the highest childcare costs in the world, while most of those working within early education and care do not earn the living wage. Many early education practitioners are forced to sign-on the Live Register for unemployment benefits during the summer months. These conditions make care and education quality variable and staff turnover increasingly high. Salaries account for 60-80% of costs in early childhood services. High quality early childhood provision is labour intensive by nature and so staffing costs are high even when actual wages are low.

The Early Impact submission previously cited recommends an increase in government investment in early education, reaching the OECD average of 0.8% within 5 years and the UNICEF benchmark of 1% within 10 years.

The early childhood sector is calling for a significant increase in capitation payment rates at both higher and lower levels within the ECCE scheme along with the introduction of an equal level of capitation for the under 3s rooms. This is in order to eliminate the increasing risk of 'squeezing out' provision for children under three. There is currently no capitation provided for the under 3s and, therefore, little incentive for financially struggling services to keep these rooms operational. As previously stated the actual cost of delivering these services needs to be determined by an independent review of costings so that the capitation paid can be adequately reflected in government investment. This review needs to become a priority initiative.

The sector also advocates that all support services available to staff working with children in the ECCE Programme be extended to those working with children under three. This includes AIM supports and training. The sector also wants equality in relation to conditions for those working with children under three. The first 1,000 days in a child's life are the most important to their development, yet those working with these children require lesser qualifications and typically earn lower wages than those working with children over three. This reality goes back to the previously mentioned lack of value

¹² The Scottish Government (2013) *Early Childhood Education and Care Provision: International Review of Policy, Delivery and Funding Final Report*. Available at <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0041/00416230.pdf>

placed in care work in our society, as well as the lack of value placed on children, particularly young children.

iii) Lack of Consultation with Sector

Throughout the series of outreach meetings conducted for the purpose of this report, it was repeatedly stated that the sector felt side-lined when consultation, development and implementation of the ACS was conducted with the DCYA. Workers felt their opinions were sought as a box-ticking exercise and their views and submissions were not seriously considered. There was also the view that some early years stakeholders were the primary sources for consultation, while providers, staff and students were not sufficiently brought into the conversation. Where submissions were made by the broad sector to the DCYA, the overriding opinion was that suggestions were not taken on board.

Stakeholders stated that one of the most obvious examples of the opinions of the sector being disregarded was the introduction of the second pre-school year in Budget 2016. During consultations with the sector and stakeholder organisations prior to this, all were in unanimous agreement that the introduction of the second year, whilst welcome, would be better deferred until such times as a full evaluation of the one-year scheme year was carried out. It was suggested that this should include the appropriateness of capitation levels, staff remuneration and so on. Subsequently, a second year was introduced which essentially replicated the shortcomings entrenched in the first year.

This common view that the sector is not being 'heard' does not bear well for maximum 'buy-in' from the sector when it comes to the implementation of any new measures to be introduced by the DCYA. Those who will be carrying out the work of the proposed changes must be on side and willing to work with the DCYA if a new scheme is to succeed.

The Early Years Policy Unit of the Department of Education and Skills hosted a public consultation event on Saturday 19 November 2016 in Dublin Castle. The purpose of the event was to inform stakeholders about the ongoing review of Occupational Role Profiles, to present preliminary findings of the review of international literature and policy documents, and to discuss key areas for revision of the Profiles. A wide range of early childcare participants was represented and the resulting report by Professor Mathias Urban (2017) has been received positively by service providers, practitioners and stakeholders. Professor Urban stated that:

'For any external observer, one of the most intriguing features of the Irish early childhood sector is the amount of policy initiatives and projects in the sector, and the number of actors developing and launching these initiatives. Experience in other countries shows that more initiatives don't necessarily lead to sustainable

*change, improved outcomes, or more effective use of resources. One way of addressing the situation could be to agree and conduct a thorough and comprehensive review of recent, current, and planned new initiatives and their impact on the early childhood system.*¹³

The public consultation meeting in November 2016 was, in fact, a unique endeavour. Most practitioners in the Early Childhood system feel that their concerns and issues get scant attention within the framework of children's and women's rights and that the sector within which they operate needs to be valued, both financially and culturally. Therefore, this initiative was seen to be a positive step that needs to be built upon by conducting the comprehensive review advocated by Professor Urban and ensuring that the early years workforce is invited to actively participate in this review.

iv) Training and Upskilling

Due to the rapid development and change of the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector in Ireland, professionals have to constantly adjust to their multifaceted roles in caring and educating young children. This is only possible with a solidly educated and innovative workforce that regularly upgrades and improves its knowledge (Hmelak, 2010).

According to the OECD (OECD, 2006) staff training is one of the determining factors for quality in the ECEC together with fair working conditions for practitioners in the sector.¹⁴ The OECD (2001) states that staff working with children on ECEC programmes have a major impact on children's early development and learning.¹⁵ Their research shows the links between strong training and support of staff – including appropriate pay and conditions – and the quality of ECEC services. In particular, staff who have more formal education and more specialised early childhood training provide stimulating and supportive interactions with children. The more recent publications such as *Children in Scotland, (2010) Working for Inclusion: an overview of European early years services and their workforce*, Children of Scotland, Edinburgh¹⁶ and the OECD (2012) report *Starting Strong III – A Quality Toolbox for Early Childhood Education and Care*, OECD, Paris¹⁷, substantiate these statements.

¹³ Urban, M. et al. (2017) Review of Occupational Role Profiles in Ireland in Early Childhood Education and Care p.5 Available at: <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/Final-Review-of-Occupational-Role-Profiles-in-Early-Childhood-Education-and-Care.pdf>

¹⁴ OECD (2006). Starting Strong II. Early Childhood Education and Care, OECD, Paris. Available at: <http://www.oecd.org/education/school/37417240.pdf>

¹⁵ OECD (2001). Starting Strong. Early Childhood Education and Care, OECD, Paris. Available at: <http://www.oecd.org/education/school/2535215.pdf>

¹⁶ Available at: http://www.childreninscotland.org.uk/sites/default/files/WFI_Research%20overview%20report_Jan10.pdf

¹⁷ Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/edu/school/49325825.pdf>

Both education and training appear to be better predictors of childcare quality than practitioner's age, work experience or professionalism. The fact that childcare providers who continuously participate in training offer higher quality care than providers who attended training sporadically is also evident.

In Ireland, most training currently supported by State funding in the Early Childhood sector focuses on the ECCE scheme, with less training or development offered for those working with children under three years of age (e.g. Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) training). It was highlighted by practitioners that the level of supports available to those working with children over three should be available to those working with under 3s, and that there cannot be an inequality in relation to supports available. Such inequality serves only to disadvantage both staff and children.

The process of professional development is understood as being a lifelong process lasting through each phase of a practitioner's teaching life. Development takes place in a number of contexts and through a variety of activities.

In general, training provides great support to the workforce and has the potential to enhance the work they do on a daily basis with the children and their parents. However, the reality exists that most of this CPD is unaccredited and occurs during personal unpaid time. This is unacceptable for a workforce that is on little more than minimum wage. Many said they cannot access the training because it is offered in the evening and they would often have to pay a babysitter or incur travel costs that they cannot afford. Others stressed that they struggle to attend because they need to hold down a second job in the evenings and weekends to supplement their family income.

v) LINC Training

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs together with the Department of Education and Skills recently opened up more availability for LINC training for the upskilling of practitioners in order to educate and care for children with additional needs. This is being done as part of AIM the new scheme to make ECCE provision more accessible to children with additional needs. LINC is being offered by a consortium, led by Mary Immaculate College, and including Early Childhood Ireland and Maynooth University – The Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education in a number of locations across the country. While there is a small bursary available to Early Years professionals enrolled in these courses, it does not sufficiently remunerate participants for the true cost of attending, and for the evenings and Saturdays that they are required to give up in order to do so. The sector believes there is a need to increase the number of locations where this training is on offer in order to ensure access to attendance and to minimise the expense involved. As has already been illustrated, the early childhood sector is among the lowest paid professions in Ireland and additional travel and lunch expenses might discourage some practitioners' attendance.

vi) The Role of State Funded Training Agencies in Improving Quality Standards

Training organisations offering accredited childcare training programmes have a crucial role to play in ensuring the high standard of training on offer. Training organisations need to be fully committed to providing the best quality training programmes for the early years workforce. Those facilitating programmes must hold the appropriate skills, experience and qualifications and regularly access continuing professional development themselves to keep updated in early childhood policy and practice. Quality assurance standards should be consistently applied and all early childhood care and education programme content should be current, relevant and fit for purpose.

Training organisations should also ensure that there are sufficient places available on part-time courses so that the early childhood workforce can combine work and study while progressing to levels 7 and above on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Systems of Recognition for Prior Learning (RPL) should be in place to recognise and reward the skills base developed by staff working in the sector, who require formally recognised qualifications, over a number of years.

vii) Higher Skills - Drain

Although the Quality Development Service under the Better Start Initiative provided 100 positions across its Quality Development and Access and Inclusion Teams in the past 2 years, no effort has been made to date to replenish the skills drain that this has had on an already struggling early years sector. The sector is of the view that a proactive response to this would be the immediate opening of a Learner Fund specifically to support higher level qualifications (NFQ 7 and above) to support and build on the current 37% graduate level workforce (Pobal 2016) to 70% over the next 5 years.

viii) AIM

Children referred by TUSLA, for fully subsidised payment of childcare fees on welfare or family support grounds, provides support for the most vulnerable children in our communities. However, there are other children who do not fit into the TUSLA referral system. In that respect, the sector felt that the AIM model should be broadened to include additional needs other than disability, and be extended beyond the free pre-school scheme.

To that effect, it was stated that there would need to be a change in the criteria assessed for support. A more holistic approach rather than computerised system of assessment currently in force would be helpful. In other words, if both the service provider and the parent agree that a child needs support, and in tandem with agreement from the local County Childcare Committee, that agreement should be considered sufficient evidence of need. Then a child-centred plan/pathway could be developed for that child.

It was also shared that there is a critical need for trust and respect in the judgement of service staff since they ‘are the very people who know and work with these children every day, not strangers who deliver a once-off assessment.’ The current system is deemed to be unfair to a vulnerable child and not to his/her social or educational benefit.

Finally, it was stated that the immersion of children with additional needs into regular services is not always the best option for all such children, and that it is unfair to expect every child to react in a uniform way. Some children need additional time and care, which is not being met through the current system provided through AIM. The 10-hour option of support was viewed as insufficient when the ECCE scheme provides for 15 hours per week. The question was asked – ‘What does the child who needs those additional supports do for the remaining 5 hours during the week?’ It was the general opinion, therefore, that the 15-hour option provided within AIM should become the standard option. The individual needs of each child must be met in a way that fully supports his or her access and inclusion to the full programme of activities available in the centre.

ix) Reliance on Community Employment workers

The Community Employment (CE) programme is designed to help people who are long-term unemployed and other disadvantaged people to get back to work by offering part-time and temporary placements in jobs based within local communities. Participants can take up other part-time work during their placement. After the placement, participants are encouraged to seek permanent part-time and full-time jobs elsewhere based on the experience and new skills they have gained while in a CE Scheme. The CE programme is administered by the Department of Social Protection (DSP).

Statistics provided by Pobal (2016)¹⁸ indicated that half of all staff working in the early years sector in 2016 did so, on a part-time basis. It showed that staff directly employed by private providers are three times more likely to work part-time than an average worker in Ireland and that staff in community services (60%) are more likely to be part-time than those in private services (42%). One in four staff in community services (27%) is on a work placement activation programme such as CE, Tus, or the Community Services Programme (CSP). The percentage of staff who have been working within their current facility for less than 12 months has grown from 15.6% in 2014 to 18% for this period. This indicates either an increase in the number of new entrants to the sector, as a result of increased staffing, or else an increase in the turnover rate.

¹⁸ Pobal *Early Years Sector Profile 2015-2016* p 7. Available at: <https://www.pobal.ie/Publications/Documents/Latest%20Early%20Years%20Sector%20Profile%20Published.pdf>

Staff engaged in CE traineeships, have traditionally provided significant support in community early years services. They allowed a service to augment the level of support provided to the children and families. The CE trainee also receives support in gaining a qualification and experience in early childhood education and care and thus a pathway into the workforce. Some community services were dependent on CE trainees to meet the regulated ratios. Since the introduction of minimum early years qualification requirements for all those employed in early childcare, CE trainees can no longer be included in the ratios. Some community services have, therefore, become unsustainable as they have had to hire on staff to meet the worker/children ratios and their current funding model is insufficient to pay the wage of an additional person. There are a number of proposed solutions to this issue:

- Increase capitation to all services so that they can afford to cover all the costs associated with delivering high quality early childhood education and care.
- Establish and fund Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) model community early years services that provide intensive early intervention and prevention services for young children and families in identified disadvantaged areas.
- Provide interim funding on an annual sliding scale over a period of 5 years to allow the effected service to become sustainable while incorporating this additional cost.

x) Inspection System

Inspection programmes are currently carried out by a range of government bodies: Tusla, Pobal, Department of Education and Skills and the DCYA, to name the most prominent. The multitude of inspection bodies is perceived as confusing and there appears to be a desire to consolidate sector inspections under one roof.

An emphasis on inspection and regulation is seen as part of the professionalisation and quality raising process within the sector. The Department of Education's *Survey of Early Years Practitioners (2016)*¹⁹ asserts that there is overwhelming support from practitioners for one regulatory body. Many respondents expressed concern with regard to multiple inspections in early years, and a lack of integration across the different inspection regimes.

The high cost of implementing both health and education inspection systems were also cited by stakeholders as potentially loss of expenditure for other parts of the system.

¹⁹ Available at: <https://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Early-Childhood/Early-Years-Practitioner-Survey-Findings-2016.pdf>

The situation was also compared with the education sector in which ‘the teacher is accredited with common sense..... and to do things professionally, whereas it appears the childcare sector are not completely trusted.’

The sector believes that any future development of the inspections framework needs to be time effective for the practitioners and settings and impact positively on the amount of administrative work required. It was noted during engagements with the sector that Early-years education-focused inspection (EYEI) inspectors have been fully rolled out and inspect under Aistear, which has been in existence since 2009. However, inspections are also taking place in advance of a comprehensive roll out of the Aistear framework and training nationally, and this is creating a difficulty for some.

While acknowledging this difficulty, there is a plan to roll out more training on the practice frameworks. It is recommended that this should be accredited training that is part of a comprehensively funded CPD programme. CPD days allocated to it should be in each programme contract. It should be comparable to the model available for primary teachers, with the need to be cognisant of the fact that primary teachers received extra training days when the primary curriculum was introduced in 1999.

xi) Non – Contact Time

Service Providers and staff stated that a considerable amount of non-contact time is expended on paperwork and administration, which inevitably cuts into providers’ and practitioners’ time for other activities, or into their own personal time. It was highlighted by the sector that non-contact payments committed to by the DCYA will not go towards payment of staff, rather, they will go towards whatever is deemed to be of most priority in any particular service. This is particularly the concern of those working in struggling services. This issue needs to be examined by the DCYA.

It is the view also that the introduction of government capitation by hourly rate of attendance has become unwieldy and non-viable. It has created additional administrative duties and does not solve the problem of chronic absenteeism in community services. It was suggested that it should be possible to introduce into the system an agreement, or contract, between the service provider and parents. The contract would serve as a pathway to improved attendance, and at the same time, it would not penalise the provider for poor attendance. It should be noted that providers who struggle with attendance are often the ones in disadvantaged areas where there may be a multitude of reasons why a child is not attending. These are often the very services that are already struggling and heavily reliant on Departmental funding.

The reality is that early years schemes do not require mandatory attendance. It is, therefore, impossible for the provider to demand satisfactory attendance - nor would they desire to do so. However, in the face of habitual absenteeism, the service provider

is penalised through a reduced level of capitation. This creates sustainability and job security issues. It is recommended that providers should be contracted for a level of service, and if issues of attendance arise, then matter should be addressed between parents and the relevant Government Department.

xii) Management of Community Crèches

The chairperson and members of the board of management in community based services are legally responsible but they act in a voluntary capacity. Consequently, their performance can often become ineffective and sometimes problematic. A system needs to be established which will clarify to whom the Board of Management is accountable.

5. PROGRESSIVE EARLY YEARS INVESTMENT IN OTHER EU COUNTRIES²⁰

It would be helpful to compare the early years childcare sectors operating in several European countries with the increasingly unsustainable system (or systems) existing in Ireland. The differences between experiences offered to children, parents and workers in those countries and in our own are stark. It was frequently stated during outreach meetings with the sector that we should learn from our European neighbours' experiences and that there are valuable lessons to be learned.

Sweden

- 80% of formal ECEC places are provided by municipalities.
- In 2011 7% of the costs of a pre-school place and 17% of an after-school place were financed through parent fees. The remainder was paid by municipalities.
- 51.7% of workers in the ECEC sector have a university degree.
- In Sweden, Kommuns (municipalities) determine work conditions such as pay, group size and adult/child ratios.

Denmark

- Denmark has a fully integrated ECEC system with a universal entitlement to a full-time place for children from 26 weeks old to compulsory school age. The child's entitlement starts before the end of the maximum paid parental leave, giving parents leeway in deciding when to return to work.
- 74% of ECEC services for pre-school age children are offered by the municipality. The rest is made up of independent institutions that are run on a non-profit basis by

²⁰ The Scottish Government (2013) *Early Childhood Education and Care Provision: International Review of Policy, Delivery and Funding Final Report*. Available at: <http://www.nls.uk/scotgov/2013/9781782564164.pdf>

associations or parents in agreement with the municipality, and they receive public funding.

- Pedagogues, or educators, holding a university degree are the lead personnel in all day care facilities. They account for 60% of staff.

Finland

- The Finnish ECEC system is divided into two parts. ECEC (0-5 years) and pre-primary for 6-year-olds.
- Municipal ECEC is provided at ECEC centres and as family day-care and play activities.
- Staff qualifications in ECEC centres require at least a secondary school level degree in the field of social welfare and day-care. One in three in the staff must have a higher-level education degree.
- For home based child-minders, a competence-based vocational qualification is required.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH AFFAIRS

The Joint Committee on Children and Youth Affairs recommends that the following measures are taken:

- Carry out, as a matter of priority and urgency, a nation-wide independent cost review of the entire sector so that an accurate calculation of finances can be provided to ensure the overall sustainability of the sector and the provision of high quality accessible education and care in both rural and urban areas;
- Publish and roll out the Early Years Strategy to avoid further fragmentation of the sector - This strategy must be widely consulted with the sector and cannot be rushed, however, this piece of work should be made a matter of immediate priority;
- Develop a plan over a period of time to Introduce working terms and conditions on a par with the rest of the education system;
- Commission the development of a nationally agreed pay scale for the early years workforce linked to the Occupational Role Profiles that recognises qualifications, experience and length of service. The living wage should be a guideline as a starting point. Introduce pay scales that have base-line qualification requirements and ensure higher capitation rates are passed on to staff through an agreed salary scale that reflects qualifications;
- Ensure Non-Contact time apportioned to hours worked by staff to facilitate obligations around record keeping, observations, planning and team meetings is a contractual and paid condition of work;
- Consult with the sector now about future investment; find out from staff first-hand what would assist the sector most and where to prioritise that funding;
- Introduce a capitation rate for the under 3 year olds that will support and ensure services keep these rooms open for the youngest children;
- Address the issue of commercial rates for private services. Providers should not have to pay rates for non-profit making rooms (e.g. ECCE Programme rooms where fees are capped by DCYA and capitation paid by DCYA; also sleeping rooms that are required for babies);
- Fund extra payment for additional time needed for preparation of new ACS 2017;
- Increase the number of paid weeks for ECCE staff in the year, and introduce an agreed length of paid summer leave;

- Allow self-employed providers to sign-onto the Live Register during summer months, while working towards the implementation of 52-weeks working contracts, allow self-employed providers to sign-onto the Live Register during summer months;
- Create an immediate Learner Fund specifically to support higher level qualifications (NFQ 7 and above) to support on building on the current 37% graduate level workforce (Pobal 2016) to 70% over the next 5 years;
- Ensure that there are sufficient places available on part-time courses so that the early years workforce can combine work and study while progressing to levels 7 and above on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF);
- A system of Recognition for Prior Learning (RPL) should be in place to recognise and reward the skills base developed by staff working in the sector over a number of years who require formally recognised qualifications;
- Introduce a system whereby there is a panel of relief staff in every constituency and anchored by the CCCs; and provide additional funding to the CCCs in order to operate this;
- Reduce worker/child ratios from 1:11 to 1:9 – this would assist in early identification of problems and pay off in long run for the State;
- Streamline the inspections system and ensure consistency in the checklist of inspectors' expectations;
- Develop a passport-style system for Garda vetting that is employee focused rather than service focused; and
- Create a long-term vision for the sector. Devise an early years road-map to form part of the wider, and long anticipated 'national strategy'. The sector must be widely consulted with for this piece of work, and such consultation cannot be rushed.

7. CONCLUSION

Several months spent in investigating and consulting with those working in the early years education and childcare sector in Ireland exposed a profession in crisis. There is clear consistency in the messages being delivered, and a repetition in the issues raised. These include a lack of recognition of the sector by government, chronic under investment, high staff turnover, burnout, an exodus of qualified staff from the profession, and sustainability issues for services.

The very people, who are trusted to teach and care, guide, support and protect the youngest of Irish society, lack professional rights of their own. They work for below average pay and their conditions of employment are unacceptable for what is expected in return.

It is the view of those who took part in discussions for the purpose of this report that new schemes and new policies, thus far, have failed to have any meaningful impact on those working in an overburdened sector. Years of experience and qualifications count for little in terms of pay, working conditions, and respect. Many leave the sector altogether as a result. The high rate of professional turnover is alarming and is putting the very sustainability of the sector in doubt. If this crisis is to be tackled successfully, then the development and adoption of agreed pay scales and administration funds for all those contracted to deliver early years schemes on behalf of the government must be considered. Such allocated funds would need to be tied to increased government investment, ring-fenced and dedicated to this purpose alone.

Although the Early Childhood sector is in crisis, it was clearly evident throughout the months of engagement that those who work in the sector are incredibly committed to their work, to maintaining the highest of standards for children, and for the most part, they want to find a way to remain working in early years education and care.

Government needs to support those who want to develop a career and sustain a livelihood that is fair. Service providers must also be sufficiently supported for the valuable service they are providing for parents and to our communities. In order to achieve this, the government must, as a priority, determine the real cost of providing high quality education and care to our youngest citizens and develop a strategy based on those real costings.

8. ABBREVIATIONS AND REFERENCES

List of Abbreviations

ACS - Affordable Childcare Scheme

AIM - Access and Inclusion Model

CCCs - City and County Childcare Committees

CPD - Continuing Professional Development

CoRe - Competence Requirements in Early Childhood Education and Care

DCYA - Department of Children and Youth Affairs

DEIS - Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools

ECE - Early Childhood Educator

ECCE - The Early Childhood Care and Education (free pre-school year)

ECEC - Early Childhood Care and Education

EYEI - Early-years education-focused inspection

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

ICTU - Irish Congress of Trade Unions

LINC - Leadership for Inclusion

NQF - National Qualifications Framework

OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

RPL - Recognition for Prior Learning

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Appendix 1

Quotes from Early Years Practitioners (taken from outreach meetings)

'The Government needs to become the official employer. The Early Years sector should become an integral as part of the education system – like in other EU countries.'

'Government funding needs to be attached to pay scales and CPD.'

'We like to think of ourselves as European – but we don't act like other European States when it comes to the early years. Other EU countries fund the early years properly.'

'I think the government sees us as babysitters. I have a college degree, which I paid for like any other teacher. I'd like some respect for the job I do.'

'Managers are fundraising in their own personal time for community crèches to keep the doors open... This is not right. We are providing a valuable service to our communities. We are not recognised for that.'

'How can I recruit workers for my crèche? If they are not on government scheme I cannot pay them a living wage. And I want them to work in a very demanding job.'

'If there was a balance in funding between the under 3s and over 3s there would be more of an onus on services to provide for the under 3s. There is a constant 'squeezing out' of baby rooms and it all comes down to money.'

'The idea that this is a 'vocation' is wrong – like we'd do it for nothing if we had to. We love our jobs but we also have to earn a living. Yes, we love what we do but we can't continue to be seen as doing our work through good will. We have to be paid for the work we do.'

Appendix 2

COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH AFFAIRS

TERMS OF REFERENCE

a. Functions of the Committee – derived from Standing Orders [DSO 84A; SSO 70A]

(1) The Select Committee shall consider and report to the Dáil on—

(a) such aspects of the expenditure, administration and policy of a Government Department or Departments and associated public bodies as the Committee may select, and

(b) European Union matters within the remit of the relevant Department or Departments.

(2) The Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order may be joined with a Select Committee appointed by Seanad Éireann for the purposes of the functions set out in this Standing Order, other than at paragraph (3), and to report thereon to both Houses of the Oireachtas.

(3) Without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (1), the Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order shall consider, in respect of the relevant Department or Departments, such—

(a) Bills,

(b) proposals contained in any motion, including any motion within the meaning of Standing Order 187,

(c) Estimates for Public Services, and

(d) other matters as shall be referred to the Select Committee by the Dáil, and

(e) Annual Output Statements including performance, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of public monies, and

(f) such Value for Money and Policy Reviews as the Select Committee may select.

(4) The Joint Committee may consider the following matters in respect of the relevant Department or Departments and associated public bodies:

(a) matters of policy and governance for which the Minister is officially responsible,

(b) public affairs administered by the Department,

(c) policy issues arising from Value for Money and Policy Reviews conducted or commissioned by the Department,

(d) Government policy and governance in respect of bodies under the aegis of the Department,

(e) policy and governance issues concerning bodies which are partly or wholly funded by the State or which are established or appointed by a member of the Government or the Oireachtas,

(f) the general scheme or draft heads of any Bill,

(g) any post-enactment report laid before either House or both Houses by a member of the Government or Minister of State on any Bill enacted by the Houses of the Oireachtas,

(h) statutory instruments, including those laid or laid in draft before either House or both Houses and those made under the European Communities Acts 1972 to 2009,

(i) strategy statements laid before either or both Houses of the Oireachtas pursuant to the Public Service Management Act 1997,

(j) annual reports or annual reports and accounts, required by law, and laid before either or both Houses of the Oireachtas, of the Department or bodies referred to in subparagraphs (d) and (e) and the overall performance and operational results, statements of strategy and corporate plans of such bodies, and

(k) such other matters as may be referred to it by the Dáil from time to time.

(5) Without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (1), the Joint Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order shall consider, in respect of the relevant Department or Departments—

(a) EU draft legislative acts standing referred to the Select Committee under Standing Order 114, including the compliance of such acts with the principle of subsidiarity,

(b) other proposals for EU legislation and related policy issues, including programmes and guidelines prepared by the European Commission as a basis of possible legislative action,

(c) non-legislative documents published by any EU institution in relation to EU policy matters, and

(d) matters listed for consideration on the agenda for meetings of the relevant EU Council of Ministers and the outcome of such meetings.

(6) The Chairman of the Joint Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order, who shall be a member of Dáil Éireann, shall also be the Chairman of the Select Committee.

(7) The following may attend meetings of the Select or Joint Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order, for the purposes of the functions set out in paragraph (5) and may take part in proceedings without having a right to vote or to move motions and amendments:

(a) Members of the European Parliament elected from constituencies in Ireland, including Northern Ireland,

(b) Members of the Irish delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and

(c) at the invitation of the Committee, other Members of the European Parliament.

**b. Scope and Context of Activities of Committees (as derived from Standing Orders)
[DSO 84; SSO 70]**

(1) The Joint Committee may only consider such matters, engage in such activities, exercise such powers and discharge such functions as are specifically authorised under its orders of reference and under Standing Orders.

(2) Such matters, activities, powers and functions shall be relevant to, and shall arise only in the context of, the preparation of a report to the Dáil and/or Seanad.

(3) The Joint Committee shall not consider any matter which is being considered, or of which notice has been given of a proposal to consider, by the Committee of Public Accounts pursuant to Standing Order 186 and/or the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act 1993.

(4) The Joint Committee shall refrain from inquiring into in public session or publishing confidential information regarding any matter if so requested, for stated reasons given in writing, by—

(a) a member of the Government or a Minister of State, or

(b) the principal office-holder of a body under the aegis of a Department or which is partly or wholly funded by the State or established or appointed by a member of the Government or by the Oireachtas:

Provided that the Chairman may appeal any such request made to the Ceann Comhairle / Cathaoirleach whose decision shall be final.

(5) It shall be an instruction to all Select Committees to which Bills are referred that they shall ensure that not more than two Select Committees shall meet to consider a Bill on any given day, unless the Dáil, after due notice given by the Chairman of the Select Committee, waives this instruction on motion made by the Taoiseach pursuant to Dáil

Standing Order 28. The Chairmen of Select Committees shall have responsibility for compliance with this instruction.

Appendix 3

Joint Committee on Children and Youth Affairs

Deputies: Lisa Chambers (FF)
Alan Farrell (FG) [Chairman]
Kathleen Funchion (SF)
Tom Neville (FG)
Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire (SF)
Jan O’Sullivan (LAB)
Anne Rabbitte (FF)

Senators: Lorraine Clifford-Lee (FF)
Máire Devine (SF)
Joan Freeman (Ind)
Catherine Noone (FG)

Notes:

1. Deputies nominated by the Dáil Committee of Selection and appointed by Order of the Dáil of 16 June 2016.
2. Senators nominated by the Seanad Committee of Selection and appointed by Order of the Seanad on 21 July 2016
3. Deputy Catherine Martin discharged and Deputy Kathleen Funchion appointed to serve in her stead by the Fifth Report of the Dáil Committee of Selection as agreed by Dáil Éireann on 4 October 2016
4. Deputy Josepha Madigan discharged and Deputy Tom Neville appointed to serve in her stead by the Sixth Report of the Dáil Committee of Selection as agreed by Dáil Éireann 15 November 2016.
5. Deputy Jim Daly discharged and Deputy Alan Farrell appointed to serve in his stead by the Tenth Report of the Dáil Committee of Selection as agreed by Dáil Éireann 11 July 2017.