

Joint Committee on Children, Disability, Equality, Integration and Youth

Tuesday 14 December 2021



Opening Statement by Anna Shakespeare, Chief Executive

I would like to thank the Committee and the Cathaoirleach, Deputy Function for the invitation to attend the meeting this afternoon on the important agenda of Child Poverty. I am the Chief Executive of Pobal, and I am accompanied by my colleague Dr Margaret Rogers, National Manager, Better Start National Early Years Quality Development.

Pobal works on behalf of Government, managing funding and providing support for approximately 31 programmes in the areas of Social Inclusion and Equality, Inclusive Employment and Enterprise and Early Learning and Care.

Pobal does not have a role in policy making. We support Government in its decision making by providing evidence such as good practice case studies, evaluations, demographic information and programme data that can serve to inform Government Departments in policy decision making.

Pobal's HP Deprivation index is Ireland's primary social gradient tool, used by numerous state agencies and Government departments for the geographic identification of disadvantage and targeting of resources towards communities most in need.

Practical examples of its application include assisting in the development of the recently launched Core Funding model for Early Learning and Care and School Aged Childcare, resource allocation modelling for City and County Childcare Committees and the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP).

Pobal's role in Early Learning and Care and School Aged Care includes,

- Operational programme administration and funding of the
 - Early Childhood Care and Education Programme (ECCE)
 - National Childcare Scheme (NCS)
 - Access and Inclusion Model (AIM)
- Better Start Quality Development and learning support for service providers
- Research support for the early years sector

Pobal manages or supports a number of other programmes which help address child poverty through the provision of funding for services for children and young people around education and training, and through improved employment and labour market access for families, and other measures aimed at tackling social exclusion and providing health and wellbeing supports. Examples of Pobal's role in these areas include,

- Supporting SICAP, which includes three particular groups where child poverty might feature
- Administering the Community Services Programme (CSP)
- Managing the allocation of funding for the Healthy Ireland Fund

Through targeted supports to the early years sector, the administration and management of the social inclusion and community development programmes, supports provided to community and voluntary organisations working with children, youth, marginalised and excluded groups, Pobal contributes to the achievement of Government ambitions around the alleviation of child poverty and the promotion of safe, inclusive and healthy communities across Ireland.

We are conscious that this is one of a number of meetings the committee is convening on Child Poverty, and we have submitted some additional resources that may be of value to the Committee as it explores this important agenda. Thank you again Cathaoirleach for the opportunity to appear before you today and we are happy to take any questions you may have.