



Deputy Cormac Devlin
Leinster House Office,
Kildare St.
Dublin 2

cormac.devlin@oireachtas.ie

11 August 2026

Dear Cormac,

I refer to your Parliamentary Question 41379/26, namely:

“To ask the Minister for Children; Disability and Equality if she will provide a report on the progress made implementing the Programme for Government commitments within her remit and on the achievements since the formation of the Government; and if she will make a statement on the matter.”

The Department is strongly committed to progressing its Programme for Government commitments. Significant progress was made on the Department’s commitments throughout 2025 and to date in 2026. An update on progress on each of the commitments is set out in Appendix 1.

The Department’s mission is to fund and deliver services supported by policy and legislation that realise people’s rights, promote equality, celebrate diversity and that maximise opportunity to participate in society, particularly by children, disabled people and those experiencing inequalities.

The Department’s priorities are set out in its Statement of Strategy 2025-2028 which outlines how the Department will achieve its goals in the context of the Programme for Government - Securing Ireland’s Future. The Department's achievements in meeting goals are outlined each year in its Annual Report.

Additional achievements of the Department from 22nd January 2025 to date are set out in Appendix 2.



I hope that you find this information helpful.

Warm regards and good wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Norma', is written above a horizontal line.

Norma Foley TD
Minister for Children, Disability and Equality



Appendix 1

PfG Commitment	Update on progress
Continue to deliver the Action Plan for Mother and Baby Homes Survivors	Overarching: Third annual report on Action Plan and quarterly updates published.
	Advocate: The first Annual Report of the Special Advocate for Survivors published.
	Payment Scheme: The Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme has received over 7,200 applications, with financial payments totalling over €81 million to date.
	Birth Information and Tracing Services: The Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022 has provided clear rights of access to identity information, with more than 17,700 applications for information completed to date since services opened in October 2022.
	Tuam Intervention: Excavation works at the site of the former Mother and Baby institution in Tuam, Co. Galway, which commenced in July 2025, are continuing in 2026. This intervention at Tuam is a significant milestone in the journey to provide dignity to the children who have been so inappropriately interred there for so long. Bi-monthly reports are being provided as to the status of the intervention. The most recent report was published on 5 June.
	Educational and Research Resources: Curriculum resource on this legacy developed by NCCA for post primary school.
	Seven post-graduate research scholarships in childhood disadvantage have been awarded to date under the Action Plan.
	Commemorative Grant Scheme: The Department continued to operate the commemorative grant scheme for survivors and advocate groups.



PfG Commitment	Update on progress
Build the National Centre for Research and Remembrance	A national memorial and site of conscience - the National Centre for Research and Remembrance - is under development. This delivers on recommendations from the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (Ryan Report), the Magdalene Commission Report (Quirke Report) and the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes. Planning permission for the National Centre was granted by Dublin City Council in February 2025. Enabling and historic works are currently underway on the site.
We will prioritise the publication of and fund a new National Disability Strategy, setting out a vision to 2030.	The National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People has been published.
Increase investment in disability and capital infrastructure for the sector	A record budget of €3.9 billion has been allocated for HSE Specialist Disability Services in Budget 2026, which amounts to an increase of €628 million over 2025, or nearly 20% year on year.
	On 24 February 2026 a joint (Minister for Health and Minister for CDE) Memo for Information regarding the HSE Capital Plan 2026 went to cabinet. The HSE Capital Plan 2026 and ICT Plans were subsequently published by the HSE.
Reform the Disability Act 2005 in consultation with stakeholders.	A review of Disability Act 2005 is underway, including a public consultation process which launched on 8 June 2026.
	Work continues during the year on the targeted reform of Part 2 of the Disability Act to support the efficiency and effectiveness of the Assessment of Need Process. The General Scheme of the Disability (Amendment) Bill 2025 was approved by Government on 9 December 2025. In April 2026 the Joint Committee on Disability Matters published its report, following pre-legislative scrutiny of the Bill, and the Department is considering its recommendations. Officials continue to work with the OPC on drafting the Bill.



PfG Commitment	Update on progress
Support families who are waiting too long for an Assessment of Needs to procure assessments privately.	In 2025, 5,273 multidisciplinary clinical assessments were commissioned from private providers under the Assessment of Need Targeted Waitlist Initiative, under which the HSE procures clinical assessments from approved private providers, for those families who have been waiting the longest. Most recent data shows that 1,517 clinical assessments were commissioned in the first 3 months of 2026. Budget 2026 provides €20 million to continue the Initiative, enabling the delivery of approximately 6,000 multidisciplinary clinical assessments at a fixed price of €2,900 per multidisciplinary assessment, with a specific focus on autism assessments
Consider measures to attract and retain staff in the disability sector. We will also develop a new workforce plan to address immediate staffing shortages and longer-term needs.	In 2026 the HSE is developing targeted retention actions and innovative recruitment campaigns to address persistent vacancies and optimise recruitment across all service providers, ensuring the workforce reaches its funded level. They are also developing new roles tailored to disability services. The HSE will develop a Disability Workforce Strategy as a distinct strand within the HSE Resourcing Strategy 2026 - 2029, detailing specific actions and incentives within Disability services while remaining fully aligned with national workforce reform.
Recruit more therapists, therapy assistants and allied health professionals.	Progress is being made in recruiting staff to the disability workforce. As of end April 2026, the total workforce in HSE and section 38 disability services is 22,901 Whole-Time Equivalents (WTE), representing an increase of over 21% since end December 2020. Findings from the October 2025 CDNT Workforce Report indicate that there has been a 28% increase in the number of Health and Social Care Professionals (HSCPs) working in CDNTs in the preceding two years or an additional 321 WTEs. Budget 2026 has provided funding for an additional 976 WTE as well as 74 WTE in agency conversion, enabling total growth in the disabilities workforce of 1,050 WTE in 2026.



PfG Commitment	Update on progress
Work with the voluntary sector through industrial relations mechanisms and other processes to progress pay issues that affect the delivery of disability services and the long-term viability of organisations within the sector.	As part of the second WRC pay agreement in March 2025, an overall increase of 9.25% over two years was agreed. There is a phased implementation with a 2% increase in April 2026 and a final 2% increase in October. As part of the agreement, a comprehensive data gathering exercise to understand pay and funding arrangements in the sector is underway. A survey was issued to organisations and the responses received are being analysed. A report based on the findings will be finalised in early August. The completion of this exercise is crucial in order to create a shared understanding of the sector, particularly in regard to low pay.
Examine the establishment of new clinical support apprenticeship roles within the disability sector.	In May 2026 the Higher Education Authority issued another Expression of Interest invitation to Higher Education Institutions. This call requested proposals for the expansion of existing programmes and the creation of new programmes in disciplines critical to disability, health and education services. Progress is being made in the HSE to strengthen disability workforce diversification including with the establishment a Health and Social Care Assistant (Therapy Assistant) role later in 2026.
Increase staffing, train more therapists and prioritise children's disability teams to deliver supports and services.	The HSE is pursuing a number of initiatives to expand the CDNT workforce including: • Development of promotional pathways within CDNTs, including the development of the Case Coordinator role and the appointment of Interim Discipline Managers. Delivery of the 2026 Health and Social Care Professional (HSCP) Graduate Sponsorship Programme, following the successful appointment of 45 new graduates into CDNTs in 2025. • Commissioning of a CDNT Retention Research Project to identify key factors to support retention and workforce sustainability.



PfG Commitment	Update on progress
Provide a dedicated funding stream for assistive and digital technology, to maximise independence and harness efficiencies.	The third iteration of the Cooperative Real Engagement for Assistive Technology Enhancement (CREATE) initiative, which targets unmet needs and supports people with disabilities to participate fully in work, education, leisure, and community life was announced in August 2025. Funding of €1.079m was allocated to CREATE III through the HSE National Clinical Programme for People with Disability (NCPDP). Funding awards to 9 projects were announced on the 17th of December 2025.
Create a pathway for assessment and interventions for adults with autism.	A new Autism Assessment and Intervention Pathways Protocol was developed by the HSE and launched in May 2026. The Protocol will provide a standardised assessment process across primary care, mental health and disability services. It will be the preferred assessment route for autism.
Ensure children and their families who need early intervention and therapy input can access that support in a timely way by increasing staffing, training more therapists, and prioritising children's disability teams to deliver supports and services.	HSE preliminary data for March 2026 indicates that Children's Disability Network Teams are providing services and supports nationally for 45,472 children. The national CDNT waiting list has reduced by 50% from 16,522 children awaiting an initial contact with a Children's Disability Network Team in 2023 to 8,200 children at the end of March 2026
	In Budget 2026, €8million in funding was secured for 150 posts for CDNTs
Establish an annual Children's Therapies Grant Fund to provide evidence-based therapies.	€8m in funding was agreed for the Children's Disability Services Grant Fund to fund 52 projects over 3 years
	HSE continues to engage with projects to progress allocation of this funding
Develop and implement a follow-on plan to the Action Plan for Disability Services 2024-2026, that builds capacity for a growing population	Priority Action 10.4 of The National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People commits to "develop a new vision and reform strategy for specialist disability supports and services for 2030 to ensure that services are progressively more person-led, sustainable and cost-effective". DCDE is now progressing this work, which will subsume development of the successor to the Action Plan for Disability Services 2024-2026.



PfG Commitment	Update on progress
Work in partnership with disabled people and their representative organisations in co-designing improvements to services and prioritising what measures are most important to them.	Stakeholder engagements took place throughout 2025. A Disabled Persons' Organisation Group has been established, following an Expression of Interest process, to support the delivering and monitoring structures of the NHRSDP. This Group was appointed in December 2025 and has met on a number of occasions since. Group members have representation across the groups and structures set up to oversee the implementation of the Strategy.
	First meeting of the Delivery and Monitoring Committee for the Strategy took place on 8 December 2025.
Increase the number of Regional Assessment Hubs.	Work is underway by the HSE to standardise the existing eight assessment/administrative hubs established in 2023/24 and bring them into alignment with the six Regional Health Areas.
Support the Decision Support Service and review the operation of the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015.	Funding of €10.438m has been provided to the DSS in 2026 to enable it to carry out its statutory functions. A statutory review of the operation and effectiveness of the Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015 is required five years after the commencement of the Act. This review will commence before the end of 2026.
Work with the Law Society to create a solicitor's portal to simplify enduring Power of Attorney applications.	Engagement with the Law Society of Ireland and the Decision Support Service has taken place to clarify the concerns of solicitors and progress resolution.
Develop a multi-year capital plan for investment in residential and independent living options for both adults and children, while continuing to implement the Time to Move on from Congregated Settings Strategy.	The HSE has been tasked with developing a multi-annual capital strategy for specialist disability services. Work to finalise the strategy is ongoing. It is important to note, while Ministers are responsible for approving the overall Capital Plans, the HSE is responsible for allocating funds to individual projects in alignment with strategic priorities and within structured guidelines of the HSE's Capital Projects Manual Framework.
	In line with the Time to Move on from Congregated Settings Strategy, 31 people transitioned from living in congregated settings to community-based residential placements during 2025. €3million has been provided in Budget 2026 towards this programme of work. As per the HSE's 2026 National Service Plan, this is expected to support 58 transitions from congregated settings in 2026.



PfG Commitment	Update on progress
Continue to work to end the practice of placing young people with disabilities in nursing homes.	The HSE's Under 65s programme continues to progress the 2021 Ombudsman's 'Wasted Lives' report findings, which recommends the transition of young people from Nursing Homes into community-based settings as appropriate, in addition to providing supports to improve the quality of life of those under the age of 65 living in nursing homes.
	HSE data states that during 2025, 24 people transitioned from their nursing home placement into the community.
	Budget 2026 has committed €10million to further the programme, which is expected to support in the region of 45 transitions from nursing homes to community settings and to support investment in improving the quality of life for disabled people under 65 remaining in nursing homes. In addition, Dormant Accounts Funding of €736,380 has been provided in 2026 to enhance quality of life for adults under the age of 65 with a disability in Nursing Homes.
	The HSE continued work on their National Clinical Programme for People with Disability, including the 'Place to call home' model, which includes initiatives aimed at preventing the admission of those under the age of 65 into nursing homes.
Work to deliver the European Disability Card, ensuring rights of individuals are recognised and upheld throughout Europe	Policy work was undertaken to inform transposition of the Directive and implementation of the Card. The Department of Children, Disability and Equality engaged with D/Transport, D/Culture, D/Social Protection, and D/Enterprise on matters relevant to their remits.
Implement the Autism Innovation Strategy and ensure the development of a successor strategy.	Strategy was implemented by relevant Departments throughout 2025, and progress was monitored through Strategy structures. Two progress reports were provided by Agencies and Departments.
	Two meetings of the Strategy steering committee were held, chaired by the Minister of State with responsibility for Disability. The stakeholder led Oversight and Advisory Group met on a quarterly basis throughout the year.
Legislate to place an autism strategy on a statutory footing.	The review of the Disability Act 2005 will include an examination of the Programme for Government commitment to place an autism strategy on a legislative footing.



PfG Commitment	Update on progress
Co-develop initiatives for people with autism to address service gaps at different stages of life cycles.	Commitment was pursued in 2025 in the context of the implementation of the Autism Innovation Strategy.
Progressively increase funding for respite services, including the Home Support Emergency Respite Scheme.	As set out in the HSE's 2026 National Service Plan, Budget 2026 has provided an additional €25m for investment in Respite Services. This funding will provide a range of new respite initiatives nationally.
Continue to support and expand the network respite houses for children and adults.	The HSE's 2026 National Service Plan states that 500 more children and adults with a disability are expected to receive respite sessions in both centre based and alternative settings within their community. This represents a 7% increase on 2025 figures. NSP target – 7,332 people. 2026 funding will also allow for 10,000 additional respite bed nights nationally, including high support placements (a 6% increase on 2025). NSP target – 175,000 overnight sessions
Continue to support and offer alternative respite	The additional funding in 2026 is expected to support alternative and flexible respite models including to expand community-based programmes. Details are set out in the HSE's 2026 National Service Plan. 2026 funding will provide 25,000 additional day sessions through for adults and children including after-school, weekend, and holiday programmes (a 6% increase on 2025). NSP target – 91,000 day sessions . Funding will also be used to develop Home Sharing's potential to offer an alternative lower cost option for costly respite and residential placements, and to enable individuals to benefit from a disability service which is entirely based in a family environment and community setting.



PfG Commitment	Update on progress
Continue to support the rollout of personalised budgets nationally.	The evaluation phase of the Personalised Budgets Demonstrator Pilot was led by the National Disability Authority (NDA), which has produced an evaluation report that is now nearing finalisation. The report sets out key findings from the Pilot, drawing on the experiences of participants, families and other stakeholders.
Increase personal assistance hours.	Budget 2025 allocated funding to support the delivery of 95,000 additional personal assistance (PA) hours with almost 2 million hours delivered to more than 2,500 people with disabilities last year. Budget 2026 provided further funding to support the delivery of an additional 50,000 PA hours this year.
Increase Disability Home Support hours, and work towards aligning Disability Home Support pay with rates for Older Persons Services	Budget 2025 allocated funding to support the delivery of 40,000 additional home support hours as well as 15 additional intensive home support packages. In the order of 3.8m hours were delivered to more than 7,000 people with disabilities last year with funding provided under Budget 2026 to support the delivery of an additional 100,000 home support hours this year.
	€7.1m in new development funding also allocated to support the increase in the hourly rate payable to providers of disability home support and personal assistance services from €31.47 to €32.73 in line with rate paid in other sectors. This is in addition to the €8.8m allocated for the full year cost of increasing the rate from €25 to €31.47, a process which was commenced last year.
Increase investment in adult day services.	Budget 2026 allocated €24.5 million to fund the establishment of in the order of 1,400 school leaver placements for September 2026. There was also funding provided for the Full Year Costs of the 1,300 placements funded in Budget 2025.
	Budget 2026 also, for the first time, allocated €1.6 million to support the delivery of in the order of 53 placements for non-school leaver placements in 2026.
Strengthen supports in the deferred referral approach for school leavers from special schools.	Dept. of Education has undertaken a transitions pilot with 41 special schools where information and support are provided to students to make informed decisions on post school options and pathways.



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	More generally the HSE is supporting a day services deferrals policy (where individuals can avail of a deferral if they wish). In 2025, 438 individuals chose to defer their place.
Develop a vehicle upgrade initiative for disability service providers.	The upgrade of vehicles may be proper to the HSE's Capital budget. DCDE will engage with the HSE to ascertain what is feasible having regard to the existing demands on the budget and the variety of transport solutions pursued in different RHA areas.
After reviewing the recent two-year healthcare funding agreement, we will consider the development of a multiannual approach for disability services, which will be linked to productivity, staff levels and the delivery of services.	No action taken/outcome achieved to date as this commitment is contingent on the review of the arrangements in place for DOH. The matter is being kept under review by this Department.
Government will progress the implementation of the collaboration agreement with the World Health Organisation. This includes the delivery of a Global Conference on Health Workforce Optimisation and Digital/Assistive Technologies EXPO.	A capacity review of Ireland's provision of assistive technology, conducted by the WHO, was completed. The Global Conference and EXPO will be hosted in Dublin in Q1 2027.
Publish plans for our upcoming Presidency to deliver against strategic priorities for Europe and Ireland	Ireland's full policy programme and calendar of events was published on 10 June 2026 and are available on www.ireland2026.eu . DCDE will host 10 substantial events in Ireland in the second half of 2026, including a series of High-Level Conferences, Senior Officials Meetings and associated Presidency events. The Informal meeting of Equality Ministers (EPSCO Equality) is scheduled to take place in Kerry on 22-23 November. The Presidency provides an opportunity to spotlight issues where Ireland has special expertise and interest, and we will place particular emphasis on disabled people, marginalised groups and the participation of children and young people in these events.



PfG Commitment	Update on progress
Engage in discussions at key international forums, including the EU and the UN, to uphold the universal nature of human rights, ensuring that these rights apply equally to all individuals, regardless of gender identity, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic.	DCDE is preparing for the State's participation in the fourth cycle of the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR) this year. The UPR is a unique mechanism of the Human Rights Council under which each UN Member State undergoes a peer review of its human rights records every 4.5 years. As part of this process, DCDE has been liaising with other Government Departments and is now preparing the submission of the national report to the UN this summer, ahead of the State's review at the Human Rights Council in Geneva on 10 November 2026. To inform the preparation of the State report, DCDE has conducted consultations with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), National Human Rights Institutions in October 2025. Consultations also took place with children and young people. DCDE is currently working to put in place measurements to support CSO participation at the UPR Pre-sessions in Geneva this August. In addition, DCDE is coordinating the State's response to the List of Issues raised by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which is due for response by July 2026. The List of Issues is part of the UN treaty monitoring process and sets out questions and requests for further information from the Member State to assist the Committee in assessing the implementation of the Convention. DCDE coordinated the State delegation to appear before the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in July 2025. In February 2026, Officials from the Department attended a HLG on Gender Mainstreaming in Cyprus. In March 2026, Minister Higgins attended the Commission on the Status of Women at the UN in New York. In June 2026, Minister Higgins attended the 19th Session of the Conference of State Parties to the UN CRPD at the UN in New York.



Implement the Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy.	The first Action Plan under the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy II 2024-2028 (NTRIS II), which covers the period 2024 – 2026, has continued to be implemented by Departments, State Agencies, and the national Traveller and Roma organisations. The first NTRIS II annual narrative report was published at end April 2026. The third NTRIS II Steering Committee meeting took place on 26 February 2026 and the fourth meeting took place on Thursday 11 June 2026. The Second National Traveller and Roma Forum took place on 26 March and was attended by 80 people. The Department, working in collaboration with National Traveller and Roma organisations, has finalised an agreed standard for cultural awareness and anti-racism training for staff across the public sector who provide public services to Travellers and Roma. This document was published in May 2026. The National Traveller Heritage Strategy has been finalised by the National Heritage Council, in collaboration with national and local Traveller organisations and the relevant Government Departments. It is expected to be published shortly. The Department continues to support the Department of Justice, Home Affairs, and Migration in the implementation of the current cycle of the Civil Service Traveller and Roma Placement Programme. Following the conclusion of the 2025 recruitment process, 20 assignments will have been made across 12 Departments and agencies. The Department has launched an open call for the expansion of the Traveller and Roma Local Employment Initiative (TRLEI) and to establish a National TRLEI Coordinator to assist in implementing the recommendations of the Special
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PfG Commitment	Update on progress
	Initiative for Travellers Support Work Report (2022). Planning is underway to facilitate the 19th European Platform for Roma Inclusion Conference under Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union.



PfG Commitment	Update on progress
Implement the National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy with focuses on safety, health and well-being, participation and inclusion, equality and non-discrimination – including online.	The National LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Strategy II and its first two-year Action Plan were launched by Minister Foley on 12 June 2025. A Steering Committee was established to oversee and drive implementation of the objectives and actions set out in the NLIS II Action Plan. The first Steering Committee Meeting was chaired by Minister Foley on the 19 November 2025. The second and third NLIS II Steering Committee meetings took place on 5 March 2026 and on 27 May 2026 respectively. The second biannual progress report covering the period July to December 2025 on the implementation of NLIS II was published on the NLIS page on gov.ie. The first annual LGBTIQ+ Forum was held on 23 April 2026. The €1.5 million 2026 LGBTIQ+ Community Services Fund was launched on 23 March 2026 with a closing date for applications of 30 April 2026. It is anticipated that funding for the 2026 LGBTIQ+ Community Services Fund will be announced in late June. It is expected that the first NLIS II annual narrative report will be published by end June 2026 Under Action 31, the Department provided support to the ‘Marriage Referendum +10 Conference - Defending Freedoms, Advancing Human Rights’ to mark the 10th Anniversary of Marriage Equality in Ireland, which took place on 13 May 2025. Under Action 1.6, research commissioned by the Department to explore the impact of social media misinformation and disinformation on the LGBTIQ+ community is underway after ethics approval was received in February 2026. Planning is underway to host a High-Level Conference on Non-Discrimination (LGBTIQ+ rights) under Ireland’s Presidency of the Council of the European Union.



PfG Commitment	Update on progress
Advance legislation to ban conversion practices.	Given the complex and sensitive nature of the proposed legislation, the Department has been carefully considering the key policy principles that will underpin the legislation to ensure that individuals are protected from harmful conversion practices while the necessary and appropriate services for those with concerns in areas of sexual orientation and gender identity are not affected. Officials continue to engage with the Office of the Attorney General on the matter. In addition, this Department is keeping developments in other European jurisdictions under review and has had regard to international experience.
Actively advocate for the rights of LGBTQI+ individuals both in Ireland and internationally.	The Department of Children, Disability and Equality is the lead Department in Ireland's intervention in support of the European Commission in C-769/22 Commission v Hungary. The Court of Justice in its judgment of 21 April 2026 found that Hungary has acted in breach of EU law on a number of levels: the primary and secondary law relating to services in the internal market, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, Article 2 TEU and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
Support the work of Young Social Innovators to make the social innovation space accessible to all young people, create new future pathways and allow our youth to have their voices heard.	The Department of Children, Disability and Equality has provided €75,000 to YSI in 2026. The funding provided by the Department is intended to strengthen and develop youth participatory practices within the organisation. A system of annual reporting is in place to monitor and record progress on implementation of the agreed objectives.
Publish and implement an updated National Strategy for Women and Girls.	The National Strategy for Women and Girls 2025-2030 was launched on 18 November 2025 by Minister Foley. Work is nearing completion on the first of two Action Plans which will guide implementation.
Encourage employers to publish statistics of the take up, by both genders, of parental leave and flexible working.	This commitment is being progressed through the implementation of the National Strategy for Women and Girls 2025-2030. The Action Plan currently in development will seek to promote transparency in the uptake of parental leave and flexible working arrangements.



PfG Commitment	Update on progress
Establish maternity, paternity and adoptive leave policies for all elected	This commitment is being progressed through the implementation of the National Strategy for Women and Girls 2025-2030. The Action Plan currently in development will seek ways to further support and enable parents, including elected representatives, to care for their children.
Examine the compensation limit for claims made under the Equal Status Act 2000.	The General Scheme of the Equality (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2024 proposes increases to compensation limits under the Equal Status Act. A Report on Pre-legislative Scrutiny of the General Scheme was published in October 2025 with several recommendations. These are currently under review.
Continue to promote the target of at least 40% for representation of each gender on boards to ensure Ireland remains aligned with international gender balance norms.	This commitment is being progressed through the implementation of the National Strategy for Women and Girls 2025-2030. The Action Plan currently in development will seek to support the work of Balance for Better Business in promoting voluntary targets to achieve 40% representation of women on the boards and leadership teams for all company cohorts.
Introduce paid surrogacy leave.	The implementation of surrogacy leave remains dependant on the enactment of the Health (Assisted Human Reproduction) (Amendment) Bill 2025, the commencement of the Health (AHR) Act 2024 and the establishment of the Assisted Human Reproduction Regulatory Authority. These are within the remit of the Department of Health.
Examine the extension of Parents Leave and Benefit and additional flexibilities.	This commitment is being progressed through the implementation of the National Strategy for Women and Girls 2025-2030. The Action Plan currently in development will seek to examine ways to support working families in meeting the competing demands of employment and caring responsibilities.



PfG Commitment	Update on progress
Implement the Young Ireland: National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2023-2028.	Work continues on the Young Ireland Advisory Council's ambitious work programme, with the Council acting as a consultative forum on a variety of issues. The Young Ireland Progress Report was published in December 2025, detailing progress made in the first year of the Policy Framework. The Children and Young People's Policy Forum chaired by Secretary General Kevin McCarthy met in June 2026. The Department recently hosted a survey on awareness and understanding of the UNCRC, Young Ireland and the European Child Guarantee, which is being considered as part of a mid-term review of Young Ireland
Strengthening Tusla and protecting children in State care Update the Child Care Act, 1991. Ensure effective and mandatory cooperation between state agencies by putting the inter-agency committee on vulnerable children on a statutory footing	Child Care (Amendment) Bill 2025 – The Bill was published on the Oireachtas website and passed second stage in Dáil Éireann on 29 January 2026. The Minister intends to bring amendments to the Child Care (Amendment) Bill 2025 at Committee Stage, these amendments will place the National Review Panel on a legislative footing. The amendments are being drafted with the Office of Parliamentary Counsel and the AGO. The Minister agreed with the Chair of the JOC that the proposed April dates for Committee Stage would be delayed until the proposed amendments are drafted and approved. Provisions are included in the draft Child Care (Amendment) Bill 2025 for the establishment of the Child Care Inter-Agency and Implementation Committee. The Bill includes a Duty to Cooperate for designated public bodies to work together to deliver more coordinated and effective services to children who are known to Tusla.
Implement the Family Justice Strategy 2022-2025 to enhance the family law system in the best interests of children and publish a successor plan. (DCEDIY mentioned in Family Justice Strategy)	The Department continues to engage as a member of the Family Justice implementation group. Areas of overlap between the Family Courts Act and the Child Care (Amendment) Bill have been identified, and specific engagement has taken place regarding coordination of the implementation planning for both pieces of legislation. The Department will contribute to the work of the Department of Justice in the development of a successor strategy.



PfG Commitment	Update on progress
Develop a national plan on alternative care to include a short-term action plan addressing current issues in accessing appropriate care places, and a longer-term vision for how the care system will operate into the future.	On the 6th of February 2026 the Minister for Children launched a public consultation for Ireland’s first National Policy Framework for Alternative Care. This was one element of a national consultation undertaken by the Department, which concluded in April 2026 and included robust engagement with the public, key stakeholders, key workers and children and young people. The Framework will aim to articulate a future and Whole of Government vision of alternative care in Ireland, including aftercare, and will also deliver on a Programme for Government commitment in this regard.
Increase the Foster Care Allowance and ensure increases in the new Initial Placement Payment.	Following significant increases to the Foster Care Allowance in 2024, DCDE engaged with a range of stakeholders, including foster carers, over 2025 regarding enhancing financial supports for this vital service. This engagement occurred as part of the consultation for the National Policy Framework on Alternative Care, which will provide an evidence-informed policy approach to supporting foster care.
Examine pension provision for foster carers to acknowledge their long-term commitment and ensure valued support after their fostering years.	DCDE engaged with a range of stakeholders, including foster carers, over 2025 and into 2026 regarding examining a pension solution for foster carers. This engagement occurred as part of the consultation for the National Policy Framework on Alternative Care, which will provide an evidence-informed policy approach to supporting foster care.
Examine the Back-to-School Clothing and Footwear Allowance eligibility criteria to allow flexibility for foster carers.	In June 2025 the Minister for Social Protection announced that the Back-to-School Clothing and Footwear Allowance eligibility is extended to include children for whom Foster Care Allowance is being paid.



PfG Commitment	Update on progress
Examine ways to further support all young people as they age out of state care and foster care.	In 2025 DCDE and DHLGH officials revised the Protocol on Young People Leaving Care, which aims to ensure consistent and improved assessment, housing, and support for young people leaving State care. DCDE engaged with a range of stakeholders over 2025 and into 2026 regarding supporting young people as they age out of State care. This engagement occurred as part of the consultation for the National Policy Framework on Alternative Care, which will provide an evidence-informed policy approach to Aftercare.
Establish a National Child Death Review Mechanism on a statutory basis.	In April 2025, the Ombudsman for Children published a report entitled Child Death Review: The Case for a National Statutory Review Mechanism for the Deaths of Children in Ireland. The data outlined in the report highlights that deaths of children in care are a small subset of the overall number of child deaths occurring in the State. There is no single body, at this time, which is responsible for the review of all child deaths at national level. Engagement with colleagues across Government to identify the most appropriate lead organisation continues.
Work to increase funding and expand the capacity and network of Family Resource Centres.	In February 2026, the Minister for Children, Disability and Equality, Norma Foley, announced the establishment of ten new Family Resource Centres (FRCs) across Ireland. This expansion builds on the 2025 announcement of five new FRCs and brings the total number of Family Resource Centres from 126 to 136.



PfG Commitment	Update on progress
Improve support for kinship care, to enhance outcomes for kinship families.	A scoping paper for the development of a national policy on the rights of children in informal kinship care has been completed which covers a review of relevant legislation, the current realities for families in such arrangements, and national and international literature and best practice models. Consultations have been completed with children and young people with direct experience of informal kinship care. In addition, qualitative research has been undertaken with informal kinship carers and, parents have been consulted on their experience through a survey. The Department is currently in the process of drafting preliminary policy recommendations, based on the consultations and research, for consideration by the Steering and Advisory Groups for the development of the policy, and Minister Foley, with a view to finalising the policy in 2026.
Expand Barnahus nationally and strengthen measures aimed at preventing violence against children.	Implementation of Barnahus is ongoing across Government. Barnahus West is fully operational. Barnahus South is taking referrals and a site has been agreed. Work is ongoing on the development of Barnahus East
Support Tusla and ensure their structures are robust, responsive and capable of safeguarding every child in need	The Department continues to review and enhance its oversight processes with Tusla with a view to optimising governance and performance. A revised Oversight Agreement 2026 has just been signed and will be reviewed on an annual basis or as necessary going forward. The Department engaged with Tusla in applying data-based evidence on activity levels both in the preparation of budget submissions and in the oversight of performance.



PfG Commitment	Update on progress
Undertake a broad consultation and publish a detailed Action Plan to build an affordable, high-quality, accessible early childhood education and care system with State-led facilities adding capacity.	Shaping the Future: The Early Years Action Plan, Phase 1 report (published on the 17 of December 2025) sets out measures to achieve key Programme for Government commitments on the affordability, quality, and accessibility of early learning and care and school-age childcare. One of the central objectives of Shaping the Future is to reduce parental fees to a maximum of €200 per month over the lifetime of the Government. The Action Plan adopts a phased approach that enables action to be taken in 2026 while allowing adequate time for a broad public consultation and analysis on longer-term actions. In line with the Programme for Government commitment, a broad public consultation process is currently underway. An online survey has been completed, with more than 11,000 responses. Approximately 50 local consultation events took place between the 20 - 30 April 2026 with the support of the City and County Childcare Committees. Phase 2 actions will be published later in 2026 and will be undertaken from 2027 through to the end of 2029. Phase 2 actions will include a roadmap to reduce parental fees to a maximum of €200 per month over the lifetime of the Government. The second report detailing 2027-2029 actions will be published later in 2026, following broad public consultation which is needed because of the nature and scale of reforms under consideration in the Programme for Government.
Extend the National Childcare Scheme to childminders working in the family home, with sensible regulations that fit home-based care.	All paid, non-relative childminders who work in their own homes can now register with Tusla and access the National Childcare Scheme. The childminding-specific Regulations, which came into effect in September 2024, are designed to be proportionate and appropriate to the home and family setting in which childminders work.



Reduce the Administrative Burden on ELC and SAC providers	Simplify and Support, the Action Plan for Simplification was published in December 2025, in line with the Programme for Government commitment to reduce the administrative burden on early learning and childcare providers. Simplify and Support focuses on a vision to create an early learning and childcare sector where administrative and regulatory requirements are simple, transparent and proportionate - improving access to programmes and schemes for children and parents and enabling providers, early years educators and school-age practitioners to focus on delivering high-quality early learning and childcare - while ensuring the highest standards of child safety, high-quality experiences and accountability for Exchequer funding. The Action Plan focuses on eight key objectives: 1. Simplify the programmes and schemes 2. Streamline and align regulatory and compliance requirements 3. Upgrade the digital system and improve user experience 4. Embed 'Once-only' data capture 5. Clear, consolidated, accessible guidance 6. Strengthen provider capacity and sector supports 7. Enhance coordination and alignment between agencies 8. Simplify processes and reduce administrative requirements on parents Implementation of Simplify and Support is being led by the Department of Children, Disability, and Equality, supported by a Cross Sectoral Group providing oversight. The Cross Sectoral Group, which is current being convened, will establish a set of key performance indicators to measure the effectiveness of simplification efforts and will
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PfG Commitment	Update on progress
	publish an annual report of progress. Some key projects currently underway this year include: • An independent review of financial compliance checks associated with programmes and schemes to identify opportunities for automation, rationalisation, elimination and/or standardisation; • An independent review of options for a long-term digital system for early learning and childcare. • The development of a single set of comprehensive regulations covering all centre-based services, replacing the existing early learning and care and school-age childcare regulations with a single combined set of regulations. • There are also steps being taken ahead of the new programme year to identify opportunities for automation, rationalisation, elimination and/or standardisation of administrative tasks associated with the early learning and childcare programmes, with planning on going to consolidate AIM, AIM Plus and AIM Non-Term applications into one application for programme year 2026/2027.
Support childminders through the Tusla registration process and expand access to local training opportunities.	Supports are available for childminders at local level through the City and County Childcare Committees. Each City and County Childcare Committee employs a Childminding Development Officer, who provides a range of supports to local childminders, including a short pre-registration training course.



PfG Commitment	Update on progress
Deepen co-operation and shared learnings between early years education and the Department of Education Inspectorate.	The Department meets with the Department of Education and Youth Early Years Inspectorate regularly in multiple forums which includes opportunities for discussion of learnings from the sector. Early Years Education inspections are carried out on behalf of the Department of Children, Disability and Equality by the Department of Education and Youth (DEY) Early Years Inspectorate in early learning and care settings to evaluate and report on the quality of educational experiences of babies, toddlers and young children from birth to six years including the universal free early childhood care and education (ECCE) programme. As part of the First 5 commitment to develop a single body that provides integrated care and education inspections, work has progressed between the Department, the DEY Early Years Inspectorate and the Tusla Early Years Inspectorate.
Continue to provide grants that help childminders improve safety and quality through essential toys, equipment, and technology.	The Childminding Development Grant provides up to €1,000 to assist both registered and unregistered childminders who are providing a childminding service in their own homes. In 2025, the Department has paid €413,338 to childminders through the Childminding Development Grant. The 2026 Childminding Development Grant, announced on 12 June, will see a total of €422,240 awarded to 424 childminders.



PfG Commitment	Update on progress
Introduce and expand arts programming in early childhood education and care settings, nurturing creativity from a young age	Principles for Engaging in the Arts: A Guide for Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare Settings were published on June 11, 2025, to support early years educators, school-age practitioners and childminders in promoting arts experiences. The Department supports and part-funds the Arts in Early Learning and Childcare Scheme, which is delivered by the Arts Council; in 2025, the scheme, with a budget of €290,000, saw 9 successful award recipients engage with over 30 settings. The 2026 Arts in Early Learning and Childcare Scheme closed for applications on 2 April, the successful awards will be announced shortly. The Department supports and funds the delivery of Communities of Professional Practice (COPP) for early years educators, school-age practitioners and childminders; the COPPs, facilitated by the City and County Childcare Committees (CCCs), focus on different areas of practice, based on local need, which includes STEM and the Arts.
Continue to implement Employment Regulation Orders to attract and retain early years educators.	Through the Joint Labour Committee process, Employment Regulation Orders have been signed into law in September 2022, June 2024 and most recently in October 2025. The October 2025 Employment Regulation Orders provide for an average of 10% increase to minimum hourly rates of pay. It is estimated that 67% of those working in the sector saw their wages increase as a result of the new minimum pay rates. In line with the Programme for Government commitment to continue to implement Employment Regulation Orders to attract and retain early years educators a further €15m of ring-fenced funding, available from September 2026, to support the Joint Labour Committee process was secured as part of the Budget 2026 process. This will amount up to €45m for the full programme year.



PfG Commitment	Update on progress
Remove barriers in education and training for early years educators to broaden access to the profession	To raise the profile of careers within the sector and further support the objective of developing a graduate-led workforce, the new Nurturing Skills Learner Fund was launched in December 2023. The Nurturing Skills Learner Fund covers up to 90% of the fees incurred by early years educators studying for Early Learning and Care qualifications at Level 7 and Level 8 that have been approved by the Qualifications Advisory Board, while continuing to work in the Early Learning and Care sector. To date, the Nurturing Skills Learner Fund has been in a position to offer financial support over 700 educators in the Early Learning and Childcare sector. Nurturing Skills will be offered to over 550 applicants in 2026.
Introduce an ‘Earn and Learn’ apprenticeship model enabling childcare staff to gain qualifications and advance their careers.	Pillar 4 of Nurturing Skills includes an action to examine the development of a range of entry routes into the sector, including apprenticeships or other work-based learning, and access programmes in further education and higher education. Research on alternative entry routes to the sector, including apprenticeships, has been commissioned and a final report has been received. This will inform the next steps in the delivery of this action. The establishment of a national apprenticeship is not solely a matter for the Department as the process, set out by the National Apprentice Office (NAO), requires the development of an apprenticeship to be carried out by the sector itself. The Department are aware of, and are participating in, conversations between the sector and the National Apprenticeship office.



PfG Commitment	Update on progress
Examine the establishment of a professional register for childminders and early years educators, reflecting professionalisation of the sector.	First 5 commits to move incrementally towards the regulation of the Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare profession, building on the establishment in 2020 of the Qualifications Advisory Board and the future creation of a workforce register. Nurturing Skills restates this commitment to move incrementally towards the regulation of the profession during the lifetime of Nurturing Skills. The work of the Qualifications Advisory Board aims to ensure a rigorous qualification recognition process is a key first step to the introduction of a professional register.
Examine and expand the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) and make it available to younger children.	An independent evaluation of AIM was published in January 2024. Based on the evaluation’s findings, AIM is now being extended on a phased basis as funding becomes available. Since September 2024, targeted AIM supports are available to ECCE-eligible children outside of ECCE hours—both during term time and in holiday periods. The Department is assessing the policy implications and mechanisms required to extend AIM to children under three, recognising that their needs differ from those currently supported under the model. A tailored model will be designed to support this younger age group, which will require dedicated funding and will be considered through the Annual Budget process. An additional €3.23 million was announced for AIM under Budget 2026, which will have a total allocation of €84.04 million in 2026. This will support up to 9,000 children with a disability requiring AIM supports to access and participate in the ECCE programme in 2026.



PfG Commitment	Update on progress
Resource and transform the Supply Management Unit into a Forward Planning and Delivery Unit within the Department to identify areas of need, forecast demand and deliver public supply within the childcare sector where required.	This unit is now a Forward Planning and Delivery Unit. Additional staff have been allocated over the course of 2025 and 2026. The development of a Forward Planning Model is well advanced and extensive preparatory work for State-led services has been undertaken. The programme was launched in January 2026 and a number of specific projects are being actively progressed with a view to making decisions to invest in eight projects in 2026, with the programme ramping up in future years.
Provide capital investment to build or purchase state-owned childcare facilities, to create additional capacity in areas where unmet need exists.	€135 million will be made available between 2026 and 2030 for the State-led Early Learning and Childcare capital programme, providing high-quality, accessible early learning and childcare. The process will begin this year with investment in buildings in what will be a ground-breaking initiative for the Department of Children, Disability and Equality. Capital funding will be used to acquire and/or fit out the building, depending on requirements. The Department will work with not-for-profit providers to design, open and operate services. Up to eight buildings will be selected for investment this year. The State-led initiative will provide thousands of places up to 2030 using the €135 million provided in the National Development Plan.
Plan the development of State-led facilities in tandem with the school building programme, including Irish-medium naíonraí.	The potential for development of State-led facilities in tandem with the school building programme is being considered as part of the wider capital plans to develop the State-Led Early Learning and Childcare Capital Programme. Officials have met a number of times with officials from the Department of Education's Planning and Building Unit with a view to sharing expertise and information between the Departments and identifying opportunities for future developments.



PfG Commitment	Update on progress
Work with schools to host before and after-school care, and examine start-up supports for groups involved in afterschool activities.	Guidance on making available school buildings for early learning and childcare and other community uses is provided by the Department of Education and Youth in “Procedures on use of school buildings and sports facilities outside of school hours” published in 2024. Supporting the provision of after-school childcare in particular is strongly encouraged. 22.5% of ELC and SAC provision is delivered on school sites. School Age Childcare registrations grew by 77% from 2022 to 2025.
Review the 2001 Childcare Facilities Guidelines for Planning Authorities to ensure childcare spaces are provided and put into use.	To progress this commitment, an Early Learning and Childcare Planning Matters Working Group was established in 2024 and has met a number of times since then. It includes officials from the Department; the Department of Housing, Local Government, and Heritage; and the Department of Education and Youth. Members of the Group have also met with local authority planning officials, nominated by the County and City Management Association Planning and Land Use Committee to identify important considerations for the review. These considerations include ensuring that buildings developed on foot of the guidelines meet the needs of the local population and are fit for purpose; and balancing the need to ensure sufficient provision for children and families, regardless of the size or housing type of the development, with ensuring that buildings are effectively operated as intended. These issues will inform a wider engagement with local authorities and other stakeholders which is currently at planning stage.



PfG Commitment	Update on progress
Ensure childcare providers' fees are open, transparent and equitable and readily available to parents.	In July 2025, the Department commenced a Core Funding Fee Table Approval process, wherein CCCs reviewed the 2025/2026 fee tables of services that applied to the Fee Increase Assessment process in programme year 2024/2025. Accompanied by new fee table rules in programme year 2025/2026 and a fee table guideline document, this exercise promotes compliance with and understanding of scheme rules among Partner Services, as well as transparency for parents through simplification and standardisation of fee table data. For programme year 2026/2027, the fee tables of all Partner Services will be subject to the review and approval of their CCCs.



Review and increase core funding, ensuring the fee cap is maintained and that the model is open, transparent and equitable, and that early years educators in the private sector benefit from Employment Regulation Orders.	In September 2026, the maximum fee caps will be lowered again. Under these new caps, no parent will pay more than €280 for care of between 40 and 50 hours per week, the most common type of full day place, prior to the deduction of National Childcare Scheme or ECCE programme subsidies. €21.4 million in brand new full-year funding was secured in Budget 2026 to support providers in adhering to Core Funding fee management conditions, including reduced fee caps, from the beginning in September. This will guarantee that Core Funding’s monetary protections will continue to be passed on to families while ensuring sustainability and stability for the sector. An evaluation of the first year of Core Funding and the development of an evaluation framework for Core Funding is currently underway. This project will examine the early implementation of Core Funding and make recommendations for future evaluations of the grant supporting efficient and expedient reviews of subsequent years of the scheme. Investment in Core Funding has increased each year since its introduction in 2022 and will exceed €480 million in the upcoming fifth year of the Scheme, which starts in September 2026. This represents an increase of 86% in Core Funding in four years. Since the 2025/2026 programme year, new Core Funding elements have been designed to distribute ringfenced funding of up to €90 million to support employers to meet the cost of increased minimum rates of staff pay through the enhancement of the Employment Regulation Orders.
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Continue to build up the Equal Start programme, ensuring children experiencing disadvantage can access and participate fully in early learning and childcare.	Equal Start is a funding model and a set of associated universal and targeted measures to support access and meaningful participation in early learning and care (ELC) and school-age childcare (SAC) for children and their families who experience disadvantage. In 2026 to date, 824 services are receiving Equal Start targeted supports, serving over 38,000 children. Other achievements to date include: - Rollout of the 'Bia Blasta' pre-school nutrition programme, which commenced on 1 October 2025 for Equal Start designated services providing the ECCE Programme. - Rollout of the Traveller Parenting Support Programme in 17 Tusla areas, with responsibilities on Family Link Workers to engage with Traveller parents of young children, supporting them to attend and participate in ELC and SAC. - Appointment of Traveller and Roma Advisory Specialists to work in Better Start to promote inclusive ELC and SAC. - Roll-out of Early Talk Boost – an intervention for language delay - to settings with an Equal Start designation.
Explore making available an extra hour of ECCE each day in the second year of preschool.	Policy analysis is underway to consider the implications of this change for children, parents and providers. It is being considered in the context of the results of the 2024 ECCE review and the development of Phase 2 of the Shaping the Future Action Plan.
We will continue to grow State involvement and investment in the sector, while working in partnership with private providers, recognising this is an important element of supply	The original allocation for ELC and SAC increased from €1.109bn in 2024 to €1.375bn in 2025. The allocation for 2026 will be €1.524bn. In addition, €24.8m was provided for BOTP and IPAS in 2024, €10.6m in 2025 and €11m in 2026. Over the same period, the capital allocation increased from €20m to €30m and will be €43.7m in 2026.
Evaluate options to amend the ECCE eligibility criteria.	Policy analysis is underway to consider the implications of this change for children, parents and providers. It is being considered in the context of the results of the 2024 ECCE review and the development of Phase 2 of the Shaping the Future Action Plan.



Expand the provision for newborns and their parents of a Baby Bundle, comprising essential items to support them from day one.	The evaluation of the pilot Baby Bundle was completed. Revised costings and an updated Baby Bundle was prepared to reflect the evaluation. An additional pilot will get underway from September 2026 in Dublin's north-east inner city. This will test staying in contact with new parents for a year after birth, sending families monthly information on baby's development and supports offered by the State.
Return responsibility for international protection accommodation and integration to the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration.	The transfer of the Integration and Reception functions to the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration came into effect on 1st May 2025.
Ensure every government department Statement of Strategy includes Climate Action and decarbonisation as a key priority.	Implementing the Department's Climate Action Roadmap is included as a key action in the Department's Statement of Strategy 2025-2028.
Mandate each government department, local authority, and State agency to publish a renewable energy plan within the first year of government, detailing how they can increase their use of renewables.	This commitment is presumably led by the SEAI and D/Environment. No template or guidance has issued on this commitment to date but will be actioned by the Department once available. However, it should be noted that given that the Department is a tenant in a privately-owned building, action which can be taken in this regard may be limited.
Strengthen the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate.	Responsibility for this commitment lies with the SEAI and D/Environment. The Department has published its Climate Action Roadmap 2025 setting out its actions in meeting the current version of the Climate Action Mandate and will meet additional requirements set by any revision of the mandate.
Develop a programme to improve the energy efficiency of public buildings.	This commitment is being led by the Office of Public Works. It should be noted that this Department's accommodation is leased by the OPW from a private landlord and the Department is a sub-tenant. The Department's accommodation is considered highly energy efficient, the building having been awarded a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, (LEED) Accreditation Platinum Level 4.



Review the Civil Service Blended Working Policy Framework and consider how the implementation of this approach best delivers public services and supports the productivity of the public sector.	Review is underway.
Support the rollout of disability awareness tool, i.e., the JAM Card and Hidden Disabilities Sunflower, to break down communication barriers.	Minister Higgins launched the JAM initiative, which supports those with hidden disabilities, in the Department in 2025 and the Department is now 'JAM' friendly.



Appendix 2

Additional achievements

Achievement:	Update:
The inaugural internal recognition award (DCDE STRIVE) was designed and run in the department in 2026.	DCDE STRIVE awards campaign ran in 2026 and included: - A staff vote on the name STRIVE (Society, Transformation, Recognition, Innovation, Values and Excellence) prior to an open call for submissions in March 2026 28 submissions were received, all of which aligned with one or more of the DCDE Values - An in-person recognition event was hosted in May 2026 which also recognised the 6 Better Public Services submissions made by DCDE - A Town Hall (online) event featuring STRIVE was also held in May 2026 and included a video recorded by Minister Foley - Feedback from staff will inform the 2027 awards which will run in early in the year
Development and launch of Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making: an Introductory eLearning Course	The Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making: an Introductory eLearning course was developed to build adults' capacity to meaningfully include children and young people when decisions that affect them are being made. Developed collaboratively with children, young people, academics, and practitioners, the eLearning course translates this right of children and young people into practical, everyday action. It introduces those working for and with children and young people to the concepts, knowledge and tools they need to confidently listen, engage, and respond appropriately. By embedding shared learning grounded in rights and participation, the eLearning course is



	strengthening leadership and delivering better public services for children and young people.
Funding was secured for two Senior Inclusivity Officers to create inclusive pathways for participation structures	In 2025 funding was secured under dormant accounts to recruit two Senior Inclusivity Officers to engage with seldom heard cohorts and create pathways for those cohorts to participate in decision making processes through Comhairle na nÓg and the National Youth Assembly of Ireland. An application will be submitted for a second year of funding in 2026.
Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Amendment Act 2026	The Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Amendment Act 2026 was enacted and commenced on 31 March 2026, providing legal certainty for those wards of court who would not have transitioned out of wardship by the statutory deadline of 26 April 2026.
The co-design of the National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People 2025-2030 with disability stakeholders has been shortlisted for a Better Public Services Award.	The awards ceremony is scheduled to take place on 25 June 2026.
Equal Start has been awarded a Certificate of Good Practice in the Innovating Government, Governance and Policies Award Category of the European Public Service Awards.	The Certificate will be presented at the Awards Ceremony, in Maastricht, in September 2026.
Together for Better, the Funding Model for Early Learning and Childcare has been awarded a Special Recognition Award in the Public Sector Reform and Innovation Category of the European Public Service Awards. Together for Better was awarded a Certificate of Good Practice in 2023/24. The Special Recognition Award is for previously successful EPSA projects that have demonstrated exceptional commitment to the continuous	The Certificate will be presented at the Awards Ceremony, in Maastricht, in September 2026.



improvement of public services delivery.	
Guardian Ad Litem Executive Office	In January 2025, the Executive Office, Guardian ad litem National Service was established, is tasked with the development of a project implementation plan for the commencement of the Child Care (Amendment) Act 2022. With Ministerial approval, it is expected that the Guardian ad litem National Service will be in place mid-2026. There is substantial engagement with Judiciary, Tusla, NGO, Guardians ad litem and other stakeholders in preparation for commencement of the Child Care (Amendment) Act 2022. The Guardian ad litem public consultation was launched as of 16 March 2026, the responses to which will inform a proportionality test under EU Directive 2019/958. This directive relates to regulations concerning the class of person who can be authorised to act as a guardian ad litem.