



early
childhood
ireland

Presentation to the Citizens' Assembly

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About Early Childhood Ireland



- **Largest organisation in the early years sector in Ireland**
- **Support over 3,800 members working in the provision of early years & school-age care**
- **Registered charity employing 30+ staff**
- **Our work includes quality enhancement, publications, policy development, training, business support & information for our members**

Our sector

- 4,598 early years & school-age care services
- 74% are private
- Two thirds located in urban areas
- 206,301 children attended in 2018/19
- €184.36 - average weekly fee for full day provision
- 30,775 staff

Pathways to Better Prospects

Delivering Proper Terms and Conditions
for the Early Years Workforce in Ireland



Funding

- The project received funding from the **Irish Human Rights and Equality Grants Scheme.**



- **Any views expressed are those of Early Childhood Ireland** and do not necessarily represent those of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission.

Acknowledgements

Research Team

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Terms of Reference

Our project proposed to **examine pathways to professionalisation and improving terms and conditions for our sector's workforce**, by comparison with other sectors, as well as with international models of good practice.

The researchers also provided us with **strategies that can be applied to or adapted for our sector** in the context of the national early years strategy, First 5.

Australia

- **State provides funding via subsidies to parents and payments to services.**
- **Govt spending has risen significantly but is still below OECD average**
- **Government contributions (if any) vary across states – with mixed evidence on parental contributions**
- **The pay of 2/3 of ECEC teachers is set by collective agreement**
- **There are acknowledged issues with staffing including low pay & conditions and high stress levels**
- **Industrial action by ECEC employees in 2017 & 2018 brought no significant changes**



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New Zealand

- Considered a top spender on services
- In 2013, government was the source of 90% of kindergarten income and 75% of education & care income overall
- Described as *'leading the way in attaining a professionalised early childhood workforce'* via:
 - Qualifications & CPD
 - Career development
 - Pedagogical discourse & job titles
 - Workforce Alliances
- Still, there are acknowledged issues regarding pay and working conditions





Denmark

- Nordic models generally viewed as best in the world & Denmark is said to have the best-trained staff in Europe
- Participation rates among highest in EU – over 90% of children aged 3-years attend
- Care for children aged 6 months to 6 years is located within the social welfare system
- Viewed not just as an economic issue but as central to wellbeing of all children
- Investment in the system is around 2% of GDP (among the highest in the EU)



Ireland - Context

- 98% of staff are female
- Hourly wage of sector staff is 43.5% below the average national wage.
- Over 70% of professionals work unpaid hours as part of the job
- Almost 80% of workers do not have sick pay
- 90% do not have a private pension
- 65% do not have paid maternity leave

The Irish Policy Challenge – Who will pay?

- Early years care and education is expensive and labour intensive – this is a universal challenge.
- In 2018/19, one in every ten children in a setting in Ireland was a beneficiary of a government subsidy – from low (€20 per week – to full cover for families on very low incomes).
- Even with the current level of state subsidies, providers face low and unpredictable profit margins. This in turn hinders their capacity to pay appropriate wages.
- Increasing fees is not a viable solution as in time, as parents will then tend to care for their children at home, which in turn puts a limit on what providers can charge. And will impact on mothers' participation in the labour market.

What Ireland needs

Radical problems require radical transformation:

- A fully publicly funded early years and school-age care system, in which children have a legal right to a place from the time paid parental leaves comes to an end;
- Providers would retain their managerial role over settings and receive adequate financial compensation for personal property utilised;
- Staff would get paid according to pay scales comparable to primary school teachers, with permanent contracts of employment and access to maternity, sick leave, and pension schemes.

More Information

Download the full report from the Early Childhood Ireland website.

www.earlychildhoodireland.ie



Pathways to Better Prospects
Delivering Proper Terms and Conditions for the Early Years Workforce in Ireland

The banner features three circular inset images: a woman and a child, a woman and two children, and a woman and a child. At the bottom, it includes the logos for Early Childhood Ireland and the University of Limerick (Ollscoil Lúimnigh).

Thank you

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