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FOREWORD

The early years of the new Millennium have seen unprecedented development in the childcare sector in Ireland, thanks to the investment made by the Government under the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme and to the commitment of the members of the childcare sector and the many community groups who have worked together to foster the development of a quality childcare infrastructure throughout the country.

The National Childcare Strategy, the foundation stone for these developments, was built through a spirit of co-operation and that same spirit of togetherness still prevails today in the many structures which help us to forge a quality childcare service. The National Childcare Co-ordinating Committee brings together representatives of the entire sector to deliver an invaluable body of work. The NCCC commissioned a Working Group representative of its members to develop a report on School Age Childcare. The result is a well researched and practical report which will stimulate not just thought but also action as we work to build our stock of quality school age childcare places in a variety of settings in the future.

I believe that the time is now right for extensive development of this element of childcare and as always, my commitment is to increasing the supply of quality school age childcare places. This will of course require further co-operation between Departments, Agencies, the community childcare sector, private childcare providers and schools, but again, I have no doubt but that, as with all our other initiatives to date, the spirit of collaboration towards a common goal in the best interests of our children will win through.

I would like to thank the members of the National Childcare Co-ordinating Committee, the members of the Working Group and the team in the Childcare Directorate for all their efforts in preparing this fine report.

Michael McDowell, T.D.,
Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform
SCHOOL AGE CHILDCARE IN IRELAND

Executive Summary

A. Introduction

A.1 In June 2001, the National Childcare Co-ordinating Committee (NCCC) which is chaired by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (D/JELR) and which oversees the development of an integrated childcare infrastructure throughout the country, established a Working Group on School Age Childcare with a remit to:

(i) review existing provision for school age childcare, in Ireland and in other jurisdictions;
(ii) develop guidelines on quality standards for school age childcare;
(iii) make proposals for the development of school age childcare services, on an all year round basis, taking into account the diverse forms of such childcare; and
(iv) to report to the National Childcare Co-ordinating Committee on these issues.

B. Contexts

B.1 An Expert Working Group on Childcare was established in 1997 under Partnership 2000 (P2000) to develop a strategy which would integrate the different strands of arrangements for the development and delivery of childcare and early educational services. The principal reason the P2000 Expert Working Group was convened at that time stemmed from the fact that changed social and economic conditions and expectations in Ireland had resulted in more women opting to combine work and family responsibilities at a time when the availability of childminders and places in childcare centres was contracting.

B.2 The P2000 Expert Working Group was chaired by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (D/JELR) and had wide ranging terms of reference and a broad membership of seventy members, drawn from Government Departments, statutory bodies, the social partners, non-governmental organisations, the childcare sector and parents.

B.3 The P2000 Expert Working Group decided that its ‘childcare’ remit related to the provision of day care facilities and services for pre-school children and school-going children out of school hours and further noted that it includes services offering care, education and socialisation opportunities for children to the benefit of children, parents, employers and the wider community.

B.4 The P2000 Expert Working Group published a comprehensive report in which it laid down a series of principles which it recommended should underpin the delivery of childcare services in Ireland and recommendations for the development and implementation of a seven year strategic plan for childcare.

B.5 In relation to School Age Childcare, the P2000 Expert Working Group noted that

“There is a growing need for locally based programmes which provide children with social, recreational and development activities outside school hours and during holiday time. This need arises because of women's increased labour force participation and because of the diminishing supply of part-time childcare places. Such provision could be provided on school premises or in community buildings.
The development of this sector also requires attention to the training needs of childcare personnel working with 6 - 12 year olds.

B.6 The NDP 2000 - 2006 (NDP) made available the financial resources to facilitate the development of childcare as a measure for social inclusion and the advancement of labour force opportunities. The Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme 2000 - 2006 (EOCP) was incorporated as a key Sub-Measure of the Social Inclusion Measures in each of the Regional Operational Programmes within the NDP. The Programme offers the framework within which all supply aspects of childcare are being advanced in accordance with the recommendations of the P2000 Expert Working Group.

B.7 The P2000 Expert Working Group on Childcare also made a series of recommendations on the structures which were appropriate to oversee the implementation of its recommendations. The National Childcare Co-ordinating Committee (NCCC) has established a number of Sub-Groups and Working Groups to undertake specific tasks. The Working Group on School Age Childcare is one such Group.

C. What is School Age Childcare?

C.1 Centre-based “School Age Childcare” is a relatively new concept in Irish society although it has been widespread in its provision throughout much of mainland Europe for many years and has also expanded considerably in its provision in the United Kingdom (UK) in recent years.

C.2 The formal definition of school age childcare is not an easy task. There is no widely accepted international definition, largely because of the varying approaches which have evolved in different countries to childcare and to primary school and the lines of demarcation between the two. In many European countries, children normally start primary school at a later age than do Irish children and therefore parents are less likely to be faced with the dilemma of finding a further strand of care for their children until the children are six or seven years old.

C.3 In a 1996 Report, the European Commission Network on Childcare described School Age Childcare services as:

“services which take over the responsibility for children when school is over but parents are not available - whether because they are working or for other reasons.”

C.4 In an Irish context, there is a need to provide a childcare facility to meet the care needs of children whose parents' work or educational timetables are incompatible with school timetables. To fully address the gaps between school hours and the parents' timetables, such a childcare service may be required to provide for the care needs of children before school starts in the morning, after school finishes in the afternoon and during school holidays and pre-planned school closures.

C.5 Again, in an Irish setting, care for school going children, out of school hours and where the parents are unable to provide direct care due to employment or education and training commitments, may be provided by a child minder (either a relative or non-relative and formally or informally), or in a group setting. In Ireland it is not unusual to hear terms such as After-school Care, Out of School Care, After School Clubs, Summer Schemes, Homework Clubs being applied to services which meet the needs of parents of school going children. Some of these terms derive directly from the titles used for services in other countries.
C.6 For the purposes of this Report and the recommendations therein, the Working Group defines School Age Childcare as being “Childcare for school going children provided outside of normal school hours where the same children attend the childcare facility on a regular basis and access to the service is clearly defined by agreement with parents and guardians.”

D. Current provision of School Age Childcare in Ireland and Elsewhere

D.1 Although there has been a significant increase in the provision of early or pre-school childcare places in Ireland in recent years, there has not been a parallel increase in the provision of places to cater for the childcare needs of the school age child outside of school hours. As a result, the majority of Irish parents have limited options from which to meet the childcare needs of their school going children outside of school hours. Indeed this deficit is the *raison d'être* for the present Working Group.

D.2 The availability of information in relation to School Age Childcare usage in Ireland was greatly enhanced with the publication by the Central Statistics Office in July 2003 of its findings from the special module in relation to Childcare conducted as part of the Quarterly National Household Survey in late 2002. The Survey shows that 67,500 families of primary school children avail of non-parental childcare for their children. Of these families, the mother or guardian (in the case of a one parent family) in 62,600 families was in employment with only 1,100 mothers/guardians in education. On the basis of the tables, it is estimated that about 125,000 primary school children receive non parental childcare. (As the survey was conducted during term time, this reflects term time usage of childcare).

D.3 Turning again to the 67,500 families using non-parental childcare for their primary school children, the CSO survey found that 31,100 (46 per cent) used unpaid relatives; 9,500 (14 per cent) used paid relatives; 21,500 (32 per cent) used paid carers; 4,100 (6 per cent) availed of créches and 2,900 (3 per cent) used other childcare facilities.

D.4 The structures and arrangements for the delivery of School Age Childcare vary among the Member States of the European Union. The European Commission Network on Childcare and other Measures to reconcile Employment and Family Responsibilities commissioned and published a comprehensive review of the services available in EU Member States, albeit in 1996. The Review sums up the situation as it then applied as follows:

“A number of countries have a strong proactive policy and high levels of provision, notably Denmark, France and Sweden. In other Member States, services in recent years have been increasing from a low baseline (for example, Luxembourg and Portugal); in some cases (for example Netherlands, Flemish Community in Belgium and UK) in response to short-term government initiatives to promote services. A few countries show little sign yet of significant development of formal school age childcare services, for example Ireland, Italy and Spain.”

D.5 New Zealand and Australia have been to the forefront in the development of high quality childcare in the English speaking world and are also well advanced in their thinking on school age childcare.
The Working Group reviewed material from eight countries to inform its understanding of current international practice in the delivery of school age childcare.

E. The Need for School Age Childcare in Ireland

E.1 At a time of great economic change, it is not easy to predict the demand for School Age Childcare in Ireland with any great degree of accuracy. Ireland has, as we shall see, undergone major changes in its labour market in recent years while changing economic pressures are requiring ever increasing numbers of women to remain in the labour market.

E.2 The Working Group has linked Central Statistics Office (CSO) Education data with the National Household Survey data and estimates that the 152,500 family units with school going children and two parents in employment in the case of couples and a working parent in the case of lone parents are likely to have about 360,000 school going children under 15 years between them. While many female employees are known to be in part time employment, those with dependent children of primary school going age are almost all likely to have a need for childcare during school holidays.

F. The Further Development of School Age Childcare in Ireland

F.1 The implementation of the recommendations by the P2000 Expert Working Group on Childcare is being achieved by building on the existing range of services through a range of financial grants for the creation and support of new and enhanced childcare facilities through the EOCP 2000-2006. In adopting this approach, the P2000 Expert Working Group sought to build upon existing services.

F.2 The Working Group on School Age Childcare is of the view that a similar approach should be taken in respect of the further development of School Age Childcare. However, in so recommending, the Working Group is of the view that projects identified to receive financial support should be carefully focussed to meet the needs and interests of the children availing of the service through the delivery of a high quality service the opening hours of which meet with the needs of the parents in the workplace as well as those who might be in education or in training.

F.3 Accordingly, the Working Group recommends that, in evaluating school age childcare projects for grant assistance, the appraisal process should focus, inter alia, on:

- The provision of a high quality service in accordance with the guidelines developed by the Working Group;
- The provision of a year round school age childcare service to meet the needs of parents to combine their childcare and employment (or training and education) responsibilities; and
- The economic sustainability of the project.

F.4 The Working Group recommends that the following groups be actively encouraged to develop school age childcare facilities:

- Community based/not for profit groups, including existing groups who have the capacity to expand into this childcare sector on a year round basis;
- Managing authorities of schools who have space in existing premises to adapt to establish ‘stand alone’ childcare facilities which would conform with best practice and would be available on a year round basis;
Managing authorities of schools who have land available to establish ‘stand alone’ childcare facilities which would conform with best practice and would be available on a year round basis;

- Private childcare providers who are prepared to establish school age childcare facilities which would be open on a year round basis; and
- Work based childcare facilities.

**F.5** The Working Group recommends that provision be made within the EOCP Childminding Initiative to encourage childminders to provide quality childcare for school going children. Supports should be provided to enhance the skills of childminders, thereby increasing the provision of quality childcare for school going children by childminders.

**F.6** The Working Group recommends that groups which have received grant support for sessional childcare services under the EOCP be encouraged to further expand the range of services they provide, thereby maximising use of the premises.

**F.7** The Working Group recommends that such groups be given priming support to cover the cost of the additional capital items needed to cater for the older age group.

**F.8** The Working Group only recommends the use of school premises or school lands for the delivery of school age childcare in circumstances where the school managing authorities and owners are prepared to make those premises available for a long term lease or other long term commitment to ensure that facilities are available for a reasonable number of years.

**F.9** The Working Group recommends that the School Age Childcare facility located in the school setting must be of a standard equivalent to the high, child-focused, specification being recommended for stand alone school age facilities or for the school age childcare elements of integrated services.

**F.10** The Working Group recommends that new school building projects be encouraged to incorporate a school age childcare facility.

**F.11** The Working Group recommends that private childcare providers who have already received a grant for one property be permitted to submit an application for further priming support for the same property to cover the cost of the additional capital items needed to provide a school age childcare service, provided that such service is made available five days a week and for fifty weeks of the year. (Such additional funding would subject to compliance with the European Union's State Aid rules which set a maximum amount of grant assistance which may be made available to the private sector.)

**G. Quality in School Age Childcare**

**G.1** The Working Group on School Age Childcare is aware that it is undertaking its work when the provision of centre-based school age childcare in Ireland is in its infancy. Accordingly the Working Group believes that Ireland is in a position to espouse the highest international standards for the sector from the beginning.

**G.2** The Working Group recommends that grant support should only be made available to childcare providers who are prepared to deliver a comprehensive school age childcare programme which addresses the social, physical, developmental, recreational and creative needs of the child in a happy and caring environment.
G.3 A number of key elements contribute to the delivery of a quality school age childcare service. These include the activity programme and the importance of play; the physical environment; the regulation of school age childcare; training for the sector; and relationships between providers of school age childcare, the client children, their parents and on occasion the schools.

G.4 The Working Group is of the view that such services must be underpinned by sound principles which support inclusion and participation. The following concepts are particularly important:

- Children and adults have rights and responsibilities within the service.
- The work and ethos of the service should be underpinned by the United Nations Charter on the Rights of the Child and on the National Children's Strategy.
- Access and participation in the life of the service is open to all stakeholders.
- Children learn and develop in the context of a caring community which values their individual and combined strengths.
- Links with and between the child, family, service and wider community promote a sense of identity and belonging.
- Mutually respectful relationships are fostered and recognised as being central to the life of the service.
- Children, staff and parents engage in meaningful dialogue.
- The voice of the child is heard, respected and contributes to the service.
- Interactions are sensitive and responsive.
- The ethos and practice of the service values diversity and promotes equality.
- The programme is culturally and socially appropriate to the children, families and staff participating in the service.
- Staff and children work together in ways that are respectful and inclusive.
- Children are protected from bullying and abuse.
- The environment provides opportunities for learning.
- The service should provide opportunities for positive experiences which support learning, development and well being for all.
- The programme should promote healthy life choices.
- The programme should offer opportunities for challenge and risk.
- The programme should be of recreational and educational benefit to children.
- The programme should have breadth, depth and balance.
- Staff should be valued for the knowledge, expertise and life experience they bring to the service.
- The professionalisation of staff should be supported within the service.
- Programmes, policies and procedures should be responsive to the needs of children, families and staff.

H. The Activity Programme and the Importance of Play

H.1 Play is recognised as a basic human right for all children. The importance of play has been reaffirmed by the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Ireland ratified in 1992. Article 31, sets out the child's right to play:

"Parties recognise the rights of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts: parties shall respect and promote the rights of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity."
H.2 The Working Group fully endorses the view that play is central to the healthy growth and development of children. As a result, the Working Group concludes that a strong focus on play must be a core principle and indeed a distinguishing characteristic of school age childcare.

H.3 The Working Group recommends that the school age childcare service should plan and provide a range of play opportunities and activities to foster the development of children's social, physical, intellectual, creative and emotional capabilities.

H.4 The Working Group recommends that each school age childcare facility should set aside a period of time each week to enable children and practitioners to work together to review previous activities and to develop the programme of activities for the coming week.

H.5 The Working Group recommends that when planning play for children, the childcare facility should offer a mix of free play and structured play opportunities.

H.6 While Homework Clubs are outside the scope of the present Report, school aged childcare services often provide facilities, help and supervision for children to complete homework as part of the range of services. Whereas the Working Group acknowledges that homework support may be an element of a range of activities within the school aged childcare service, it recommends that homework support should not be the core activity of a school aged childcare service. The Working Group recommends that dialogue with the parents and children is critical on the issue of homework.

H.7 The Working Group recommends that risk taking in the school age childcare setting should be accommodated under circumstances which could include:

- good practice;
- appropriate supervision;
- awareness of the child's capabilities;
- appropriate activities;
- communication and trust between the parents and the provider as well as the child and provider;
- relevant training and qualifications for the activity provider;
- risk assessment for purposeful activity; and
- appropriate insurance coverage.

H.8 The Working Group recommends that school age childcare practitioners enshrine principles of inter-culturalism and diversity of the P2000 Expert Working Group in the programmes of activities and attitudes they are developing in their facilities. They should be inclusive in encompassing those with special needs or who might otherwise be marginalised through a disability, those who are members of the Travelling Community and those from an ethnic minority group.

H.9 The Working Group recommends that the school age childcare facility should value the diverse ethos of Irish society, including a positive approach to Irish language and culture.
I. **Other Key Issues Impacting on a Quality Service**

I.1 The Working Group makes the following recommendations in regard to the physical design of a school age childcare facility:

- The facility should offer a bright, warm environment;
- It should be accessible by children with disabilities;
- It should have a range of rooms or areas to facilitate more than one activity by a child or group of children at a time;
- It should provide adequate open internal space to facilitate more physical activities including sports and drama, where appropriate;
- It should provide a quiet area for reading, table based activities and homework;
- All areas should be designed for easy and unobtrusive supervision;
- Every room should, as far as possible, have natural light;
- Every facility should have access to an outside play area;
- Every facility should have adequate storage to keep the area as clutter free as possible;
- It should be clean and well maintained;
- It should be well insulated to maintain heat and quiet;
- It should include a kitchen area to facilitate the preparation and storage of food and hot drinks for children after the school day;
- It should have suitably appointed toilet facilities.

I.2 The Working Group recommends that every school age childcare facility should prepare a statement with comprehensive health and safety policies and procedures dealing, *inter alia*, with:

- The identification, handling and reporting of accidents;
- Child welfare and protection;
- Illnesses;
- First aid practices;
- Supervision;
- Use of potentially hazardous equipment;
- Regular safety checks on equipment;
- Behavioural problems; and
- Hygiene practices.

I.3 In line with Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children and “Our Duty to Care”, all childcare providers should develop their own local procedures and guidance for dealing with child protection and all staff should be informed of and be aware of these procedures.

I.4 Every childcare facility should have adequate insurance cover to provide against every eventuality. Both management and staff should be aware of the terms of the facility's insurance and must avoid all activities which do not come within the terms of such insurance.

I.5 The Working Group recommends that procedures are put in place in every setting to foster a spirit of co-operation between parents and service managers and childcare practitioners; to facilitate the ongoing sharing of information with parents; and to facilitate parental access to both the school age childcare facility and to the practitioners at all appropriate times.
The P2000 Expert Working Group on Childcare discussed the pros and cons of notification and registration for childcare in its 1999 work and came down in favour of registration, noting that

“Registration ...requires the State to register or licence a service as meeting the minimum standards. It also empowers the State to refuse registration and allows for annual review.”

This view led to the first recommendation of the P2000 Expert Working Group which is endorsed and restated by the Working Group on School Age Childcare which recommends an amendment of the primary legislation (Child Care Act, 1991) to encompass the regulation of school age childcare.

In relation to the content of any new Regulations or Guidelines for the Voluntary Regulation of the School Age Childcare Sector, the Working Group recommends that they be standardised to follow closely the regulations and guidelines which emerge following the present revision being undertaken by the Department of Health and Children.

The Working Group recommends that the adult to child ratio for centre-based school age childcare should be 1 adult per 8 children.

While the need to amend primary legislation has already been cited as an obstacle to the regulation of school age childcare, the Working Group recommends that a voluntary code of standards be drawn up and a voluntary notification process be put in place to enable school age childcare facilities to notify their local health board. This would incentivise the facilities to attain and maintain high standards, resulting in the delivery of quality childcare.

The Working Group, under its terms of reference, has been asked to develop guidelines for the sector. These have been developed on the basis of the recommendations of this Report and are presented in annexe to the Report. In the absence of regulation of the school age childcare sector, the Working Group recommends that these guidelines be used as a quality standard against which applications for grant assistance under the EOCP might be evaluated and be further developed for use as a voluntary standard for the school age childcare sector.

The Working Group on School Age Childcare recommends that the City/County Childcare Committees, where appropriate, identify the transport needs of childcare groups to the Rural Transport Initiative projects in their respective counties.

The Working Group on School Age Childcare recommends that the Department of Transport introduce appropriate legislation regarding safety procedures and insurance for the transportation of specific groups of people (including children).

The Working Group on School Age Childcare recommends that the Department of Education and Science review the regulations of the School Transport Scheme to facilitate the provision for transport from schools to school aged childcare facilities.
J. **Training for School Age Childcare**

J.1 The Working Group noted the training delivered for School Age Childcare practitioners in a number of other countries. It also took note of the approach to training and professionalisation contained in the Model Framework document prepared by the Certifying Bodies Sub-Group on the NCCC.

J.2 The Working Group is of the view that the school age childcare practitioner should have the following occupational abilities to work effectively in the school age childcare sector:

The ability to:

- implement good practice and work effectively in a school age setting;
- understand the specific role of the school age childcare practitioner;
- be aware of, and to be able to implement where relevant, child protection guidelines and procedures;
- assist in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the school age childcare environment;
- understand and promote all aspects of child development, education and care;
- acknowledge and promote individuality and diversity in all children and to promote equal opportunities and anti-discrimination practice;
- work effectively as part of a team;
- understand the importance of consultation with children, parents and colleagues;
- establish and maintain linkages between schools, other services that could be accessed by children (sport, dance, etc.) and the wider community;
- be aware of, and to be able to implement where relevant, all legislation regarding children, equality, discrimination and health and safety; and
- establish and maintain all relevant records.

J.3 The Working Group has already noted the importance of recognising the special developmental needs of the children who are availing of school age childcare. The fostering of these needs require a special set of skills for the school age childcare practitioner. The Working Group is of the view that the school age childcare practitioner should have the following skills to work effectively in the school age childcare sector.

The skill to:

- build relationships with children, their parents and carers;
- understand and promote the different developmental needs of children and young people availing of a school age childcare service;
- support children's involvement and participation in the life of the service;
- ensure a safe and stimulating environment;
- recognise and provide for the emerging independence of the child;
- promote individuality, balancing the needs of the child and of the group;
- promote fair and caring behaviour;
- develop the cultural awareness of the child; and
- encourage choice and self confidence.
J.4 The Working Group recommends that a specific training strand be developed to equip childcare practitioners to provide a high quality service to meet the particular needs of the older age group of four to twelve year old children who are likely to avail of school age childcare. Given the recreational nature of school age childcare, the training programmes to be developed should have a significant practical focus although it is also important to include the theoretical material which is essential to the preparation of a well-informed childcare practitioner and to the contextualisation of school age childcare.

J.5 The Working Group recommends that the following skills and knowledge should be incorporated into the courses and modules to be developed for the School Age Childcare sector:

- Quality practice in school age childcare;
- Play and activities;
- Child development;
- Health and safety, including child protection;
- Work experience;
- Role of the school age childcare practitioner; and
- Personal professional development.

K. The Way Forward

K.1 The Working Group recommends that a campaign be undertaken to increase understanding of the school age childcare sector, to create awareness of the availability of grant assistance and to promote and encourage community groups, schools and their managing authorities and existing childcare practitioners, both community groups and private providers, to consider the development of these much needed services.

K.2 The Working Group is aware that the City/County Childcare Committees have a strong mandate from the National Childcare Co-ordinating Committee to work with local interests to develop childcare to address local childcare needs. The Working Group recommends that the City/County Childcare Committees be asked to take a prominent role in working with and supporting community groups, private childcare providers and schools' authorities throughout their city/county to develop school age childcare facilities to meet the childcare needs of parents who are in employment, education and training and whose school going children require childcare outside of school hours.

K.3 The Working Group recommends that the City/County Childcare Committees and the National Voluntary Childcare Organisations as appropriate promote awareness of the guidelines developed by the Working Group for the development of a quality School Age Childcare Sector.
L. **Guidelines**

L.1 In accordance with its terms of reference and based on its research and findings, the Working Group has developed guidelines laying out key pointers for the development of a quality School Age Childcare Service which will inform community based not for profit groups and private providers who may consider seeking grant support for the development of services under the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme 2000 - 2006.

L.2 The guidelines are contained in Appendix 2.
CÚRAM LEANAÍ D’AOIS SCOILE IN ÉIRINN
Achoimre Feidhmeannaíos

A Réamhrá

A.1 I Meitheamh 2001, rinne an Coiste Comhordaithe Náisiúnta um Chúram Leanáin (CCNCL) faoi chathaioirleacht na Roinne Dlí agus Cirt, Comhionannais agus Athchóirithe Dlí (R/DCCAD), a mhaoirsíonn forbairt ar bhonnegar comhdhlúite cúram leanáin ar fud na tíre, Grúpa Oibre um Chúram Leanáin d’Aois Scoile a bhunú a raibh sé mar shainchúram air

- atbhreithniú a dhéanamh ar an solathar le haghaidh cúram leanáin d’aos scoile in Éirinn agus i ndílse eile;
- treoirlinte a fhhorbairt maidir le caighdeáin chéileachta do chúram leanáin d’aos scoile;
- moltaí a dhéanamh maidir le seirbhísí cúram leanáin d’aois scoile a fhhorbairt ar an mbonn go bhfeidhmoid dí o cheann ceann na bliana, ag cur san áireamh cineálacha éagsúla cúram leanáin d'aois Scoile; agus
- tuairiscití don Choiste Comhordaithe Náisiúnta um Chúram Leanáin ar na saincheisteanna seo.

B. Comhthéacs

B.1. Bunaíodh Sainghrúpa Oibre um Chúram Leanáin i 1997 faoi Chomhpháirtíocht 2000 (C2000) chun straitéis a fhorbairt a chor dhathódh duail éagsúla na socruithe a bhí ann chun seirbhísí cúram leanáin agus luathoidhceachas a fhhorbairt agus a sheachadhadh. Ba í an phríomhchúis ar tionóladh Sainghrúpa Oibre C2000 ag an am, gur tharla, de bharr tosca agus ionchais shóisialta agus gheileagracha na hÉireann, go raibh níos mó ban ag roghnú a gcúramí oibre agus teaghlach a chomhcheangal, fad a bhí an líon feighlithe leanáin agus an rochtain feithirt le fáil a gcuirfeadh agus go raibh níos mó ban ag roghnú a gcúramí oibre agus teaghlach a chomhcheangal.

B.2 Ghlac an Roinn Dlí is Cirt, Comhionannais agus Athchóirithe Dlí (R/DCCAD) an chathaoirleacht ar Sainghrúpa Oibre C2000, a raibh tearmaí tagartha fadraimseach aige agus tráchtáil le hoideachas agus a sheachadhadh le sheachtú ball, a glacadh as Ranna Rialtais, comhlachtaí reachtúil, na comhpháirtí móraíochta, a tharla, de bharr tosca agus ionchais shóisialta agus gheileagracha na hÉireann, go raibh níos mó ban ag roghnú a gcúramí oibre agus teaghlach a chomhcheangal.

B.3. Chinn Sainghrúpa Oibre C2000 go raibh a shainchúram ‘cúram leanáin’ ag baint le haiseanna agus seirbhísí cúram lae a sholáthar do leanaí réamhscoile agus leanáin scoile, lasmuigh d’uairíntia scoile, agus thuig sé faoi deara, freisin, go gcumíonn sé seirbhísí a thairgeann cúram, oideachas agus deiseanna caidrimh do leanaí, chun tairbhe leanáin, tuismitheoirí, fostóirí agus an mhórphobail.

B.4 D’fhéadfadh Sainghrúpa Oibre C2000 tuairisc chuimsitheach inar leagadh sios sraith prionsabal a moladh mar bhonn le seachadhadh seirbhísí cúram leanáin in Éirinn agus moltai maidir le pleán straitéiseach seacht mbliana chun cúram leanáin a fhhorbairt agus a fhórfeidhmhí.

B.5 I dtaca le Chúram Leanáin d’Aois Scoile, chuir an Sainghrúpa Oibre an méid seo a leanas i uil:

“Tá gá méadaithe le clár a bheadh bunaithe go háithiúil chun imeachtaí caidrimh, caithimh...
aimsire agus forbartha a sholáthar do leanáí lasmuigh d'uaireanta scoile agus le linn laethanta saoire. Tá an riachtanas seo ann de bharr rannpháirt mhéadaithe na mban san fhórsa saothair agus laghdú an tsoláthair d'ionad páirtaimseartha le haghaidh curaim leanáí. D'fhéadfadh an soláthar seo a thabhairt in áitribh scoile nó i bhfoirgnimh phobail.

Éilíonn forbairt na hearnála seo go ndíreach aird ar na riachtanais oiliúna atá ag cúramoírí leanáí a oibríonn le leanáí 6-12 bliain d'aois.”


B.6 Rinne Sainghrúpa Oibre C2000 sraith moltai freisin maidir leis na struchtúir a d'oirfeadh chun forfheidhmiú a chuid moltai a mhaoirsiú. Tá roinnt Fo-Ghrúpaí agus Grúpaí Oibre bunaíthe ag an gCoiste Comhcheisteanna Náisiúnta um Churaim Leanáí (CCNCL) chun tabhairt faoi shaintascanna. Orthu seo tá an Grúpa Oibre um Churaim Leanáí d'Aois Scoile.

C. Cad is Cúram Leanáí d'Aois Scoile?

C.1 Is coinceap measartha nua i sochaí na hÉireann é “Cúram Leanáí d'Aois Scoile” atá ionadbhunaithe, cé go raibh seo ar fáil go forleathan ar fud mhórthír na hÉorpa le blianta agus gur tháinig meadú measartha mór ar an soláthar sa Ríocht Aontaithe (RA) le blianta beaga anuas.

C.2 Ní furasta sainmhíniú foirmearlta a thabhairt ar chúram leanáí d'aois scoile. Níl sainmhíniú idirnáisiúnta ann a bhfuil glucadh coitianta leis, toisc, den chuid is mó, go bhfuil modhanna éagsúla cúram leanáí agus bunscolaíochta tagtha chun cinn in dtiórthta éagsula agus line idirchealaithe eatartha. I mórán tíortha Eorpacha is gnách go dtosaíonn leanaí sa bhunscóil ag aois nós sine na leanáí na hÉireann agus mar sin de is lá an fhadh b hionn ag tuismitheoirí teacht ar ghné eile cúram dá leanáí, go mbíonn na leanáí sin sé nó seacht mbliana d'aois.

C.3 Ina thuarascáil i 1996, rinne Gréasán Choimisiún na hÉireann um Churaim Leanáí cur síos ar sheirbhísí Cúram Leanáí d'Aois Scoile mar

“seirbhísí a ghlacann freagracht as leanáí nuair a bhionn an scoil thart agus gan na tuismitheoirí ar fáil – toisc go bhfuil siadsan ag obair, nó ar chuiseanna eile”

C.4 Sa chomhthéacs Éireannach, is gá áis chúram leanáí a sholáthar a fhreastlóidh ar riachtanais cúram na leanáí a bhfuil a dtuiscmitheoirí ar obair nó a bhfuil amhláir oideachais acu nach réitinn le hamchlár na scoile. D'fhionn lárághaidh a thabhairt ar an mbearna idir uaireanta scoile agus amhláir tuismitheoirí, tharlódh sé gur ghá seirbhís chúramaí leanáí dá short chun freastal ar riachtanais chúramaí leanáin roimh thosú scoile ar maidin, tar éis chriochnú scoile tríthin nó, agus le linn laethanta saoire scoile agus clabhsuir reamphheanáilte scoile.
C.5 Arís, sa suíomh Éireannach, d'fhéadfaí cúram leanaí scoile a sholáthar lasmuigh d'uíreanta scoile nó nuair nach féidir le tuismitheoirí cúram pearsanta a thabhairt dóibh, de bharr dualgas fostaiochta nó oideachais agus oiliúna, le cabhair feighlí leanaí (gaolmhar nó neamhgaolmhar, ar bhonn forimeálta nó neamhforimeálta), nó in suíomh grúpa. In Éirinn cloistear go minic tearnaithear ar nós Cúrain larscoile, Cúrain As-Scoile, Clubanna Lárscóile, Scéimeanna Samhraidh, Clubanna Oibre Baile i leith seirbhísí a fhreastaithe ar riachtanais an leachtanais tuaismitheoiri na leanaí scoile. Díonthaitear roinnt de na tearnaithear go díreach ó na teidil a thugtar ar seirbhísí i dtiortha eile.

C.6 Chun croicha na Tuarascála seo agus na moltaí inti, déannann an Grúpa Oibre sa dealrach ar Chúram Leanaí d’Aois Scoile mar “Cúram leanaí a chuirtear ar fáil do leanaí scoile lasmuigh de ghnáthuaireanta scoile, sa chais go bhfreachtaíonn na leanaí céanna ar an ais churaim leanaí go rialta, agus go hbhfuil rochtain ar an tseirbhís sainiúth go soiléir trí chomhaontú idir tuaismitheoirí agus caomhnoí”

D. Soláthar reatha i leith Cúram Leanaí d’Aois Scoile in Éirinn agus in Áiteanna Eile.

D.1 Cé gur tháinig meadú suntasach ar soláthar ionad cúram leanaí réamhscoile in Éirinn le blianta beaga, níor tharla an meadú céanna ar soláthar ionad a d’fhreastlódh ar riachtanais cúram leanaí d’aois scoile lasmuigh d’uíreanta scoile. Dá thoradh an leas na roghanna atá ag bunús tuaismitheoirí na hÉireann chun freastal lasmuigh d’uíreanta scoile ar riachtanais cúram na leanaí atá ar scoil acu. Le fírinne, is é an t-easnamh seo is bunchuí leis an nGrúpa Oibre reatha.

D.2 Cuireadh go mór leis an eolas faoi Chúram Leanaí d’Aois Scoile in Éirinn nuair a d’fhógair Príomh-Oifig Staidrimh in Iúil 2003 torthaí an mhodúil speisialta faoi Chúram Leanaí a seoladh mar chuid den Suírbhé Náisiúnta Ráithiúil na dTeaghlach ag deireadh 2002. Léiríonn an Suírbhé go mbaineann 67,500 teaghlach ina bhfuil leanach bunscoile leas as cúram leanaí neamhthuismitheora dá bharr le feadhlaigh seo, bhi an mháthair nó caomhnoír ag 62,600 teaghlach (i gcás teaghlach aon tuaismitheora a bhfreachtaíonn, agus gan ach 1,100 máthair/caomhnoír ag gabháil d’oideachas. Ar bhonn na dtáblai, meastar go bhfuagheann thart ar 125,000 leanbh bunscoile cúram leanaí neamhthuismitheora. (Ós rud é go ndearadh an suírbhe le linn tearma, léiríonn sé an úsáid théarmach a bhaintear as cúram leanaí).

D.3 Ag casadh arís ar an 67,500 teaghlach a úsáideann cúram leanaí neamhthuismitheora dár bpáistí bunscoile, fuair suírbhé an POS amach gu bhall 31,100 duine (46 faoin gcéad) leas as goaolta gan phá; bhain 21,500 (32 faoin gcéad) leas as cúramaír ar phá; bhain 4,100 (6 faoin gcéad) leas as críseanna agus d’úsáid 2,900 (3 faoin gcéad) áiseanna eile, le haghaidh cúram leanaí.

D.4 Tá difríocht idir na struchtúir agus socruithe le Cúram Leanaí d’Aois Scoile a sheachadh i measc Bhallstáit an Aontais Eorpaigh. Choimisiúnaigh agus d'fhéadfadh Gréasán an Choimisiúin Eorpaigh um Chúram Leanaí agus Bearta eile Rítithe idir Dualgaí Fostaochta agus Teaghlaiigh, athbhreithniú cuimsitheach ar na seirbhísí atá ar fail i mBallstáit an AE, cé gur i 1996 a tharla sin. Cuimhíonn an tAthbhreithniú cuimsitheach ar na seirbhísí atá ar fail i mBallstáit an AE, cé gur i 1996 a tharla sin. Cuimhíonn an tAthbhreithniú cuimsitheach ar na seirbhísí atá ar fail i mBallstáit an AE, cé gur i 1996 a tharla sin. Cuimhíonn an tAthbhreithniú cuimsitheach ar na seirbhísí atá ar fail i mBallstáit an AE, cé gur i 1996 a tharla sin. Cuimhíonn an tAthbhreithniú cuimsitheach ar na seirbhísí atá ar fail i mBallstáit an AE, cé gur i 1996 a tharla sin. Cuimhíonn an tAthbhreithniú cuimsitheach ar na seirbhísí atá ar fail i mBallstáit an AE, cé gur i 1996 a tharla sin.

“Tá beartas láidir onghchniomhach agus ardleibhéil soláthair ag roinnt tíortha, go sonrach an Dannhairg, an Fhrainc agus an tSualainn. I mBallstáit eile, tá na seirbhísí mheadaithe le
 blianta beaga ó bhunlín iseal (mar shampla, Lucasamburg agus an Phortaingéil); i roinnt cásanna (mar shampla, san Ísiltír, i bPobal Fléimeanach na Beilge agus sa RA) mar fhreagra ar thionscnamh geartreacha máthairí a chomhracht le seirbhísí a chothú. I roinnt tíortha, is beag comhartha atá ann go foilí go bhfuil forbairt cáiliúil, a d'fhéadfadh chun tuiscint a fháil, a fháilte an phobal sna tíortha, mar shampla, Éire, an Iodáil agus an Spáinn.”

D.5 Tá an Nua-Shéalainn agus an Astráil chun tosaigh i measc tíortha an Béarla i bhforbairt cúram leanaí d'archaighdeán, agus tá siad cuid mhaith chun tosaigh, freisin, ina smaointe faoi chúram leanaí d'aois scoile.

D.6 D'athbhreithnigh an Grúpa Oibre ábhar as ocht dtír chun tuiscint níos fearr a fháil ar an gcleachtas idirnáisiúnta reatha maidir le cúram leanaí d'aois scoile a sheachadh.

E. An Gá le Cúram Leanaí d'Aois Scoile in Éirinn.

E.1 In am mórathraithe geilleagraigh, ní furasta an t-éileamh ar Chúram Leanaí d'Aois Scoile in Éirinn a réamhthaighís le haon mhórchruinneas. Tá móra-thraithe tagthar atá mhargadh saothair na hÉireann le blianta beaga, mar a fheicfimid, agus éilíonn na brúnna geilleagraí atá ag tógáil, go bhfuil an mhí, go bhfuil aon mhí ar fáil sa bhruathbháisí sa lár na hÉireann.

E.2 Tá sonraí Oideachais ón BPríomh-Oifig Staidrimh (PSO) naschta ag an nGrúpa Oibre le sonraí Shuirbhé Náisiúnta na dTeaghlach agus meastar go bhfuil thart ar 360,000 leanaí scoile faoi 15 bliana ag an 152,500 aonad teaghlaigh a bhfuil leanaí scoile. Feidhmeanna iad, ar a dtugtar gach na gceart, a bhfuil le linn na bhfhorbairt de chumhacht a bhfáilte a chomhchogar tríd an CCL 2000-2006. Leis an gcarracht seo, tá Sainghrúpa C2000 ag iarraidh tógáil ar na sonraí is mó ag a bhfuil ar a dtugtar gach na gceart, agus a bhfuil ina tionscadaithe a dtugtaí a chumhacht a bhfuil le linn na bhfhorbairt de chumhacht a bhfáilte a chomhchogar tríd an CCL 2000-2006.

F. Breifhshoirbairt ar Chúram Leanaí d’Aois Scoile in Éirinn

F.1 Tá moltaí Sainghrúpa C2000 maidir le Cúram Leanaí a mbaint amach trí thógáil ar an raon seirbhísí atá ann, le cabhair raoin deontas airgid atá ar fáil chun nua-aisseanna feabhsaithe a chruthú agus a chothú do chúram leanaí tríd an CCCL 2000-2006. Leis an gcarracht seo, tá Sainghrúpa Oibre C2000 ag iarraidh tógáil ar na sonraí is mó ag a bhfuil ina tionscadaithe a dtugtaí a chumhacht a bhfuil le linn na bhfhorbairt de chumhacht a bhfáilte a chomhchogar tríd an CCL 2000-2006.

F.2 Is é dearcadh an Ghrúpa Oibre um Chúram Leanaí d’Aois Scoile, gur chóir cur chuige den sòrt céanna a úsáid i gcás seirbhísí ar a dtugtar do chúram leanaí d’aois scoile. Tá an ghrúpa Oibre um Chúram Leanaí d’Aois Scoile, gur chóir cur chuige den sòrt céanna a úsáid i gcás seirbhísí ar a dtugtar do chúram leanaí d’aois scoile. Tá an ghrúpa Oibre um Chúram Leanaí d’Aois Scoile, gur chóir cur chuige den sòrt céanna a úsáid i gcás seirbhísí ar a dtugtar do chúram leanaí d’aois scoile.
inbhuaíne gheilleagrach an tionscadail.

F. 4 Molann an Grúpa Oibre go spreagfar go gniomhach na grúpaí seo a leanas le haiseanna curaim leanai d’aois scoile a fhóirbairt:

- Grúpaí pobalbhunaithe/neamhbbhrabús, lena n-áiritear grúpaí reatha a bhfuil an cumas acu leathanmú amach san earnáil churaim leanainn seo ar feadh na bliana ar fad;
- Údarás bhainistiochta scoileanna a bhfuil an spás oiriúnaithe acu ina n-aithribh reatha d’áiseanna cúraim leanai neamhspleácha a d’fhreagraíodh don chleachtas is fearr agus a bheadh ar fáil ó cheann ceann na bliana;
- Údarás bhainistiochta scoileanna a bhfuil talamh acu ar a bhfeadh aisteanna cúram leanai neamhspleácha a bhunú a d’fhreagraíodh don chleachtas is fearr agus a bheadh ar fáil ó cheann ceann na bliana;
- Soláthróirí priobháideacha cúram leanai a bheadh sásta aisteanna cúram leanai a bhunú agus iad a bheith oscailte ó cheann ceann na bliana; agus
- Áiseanna cúram leanai bunaithte ar an ionad oibre.

F. 5 Molann an Grúpa Oibre go ndéanfaí soláthar laistigh de Thionscnamh Feighlíochta Leanaí an CCCL le feighlithe leanaí a spreagadh chun cúram leanain d’ardchaighdeán a sholáthar do leanai scoile. Is cóir tacáil a sholáthar chun scileanna na bhfeighlithe leanai a hfeabhsú agus soláthar ardchaighdeán cúram leanai ag feighlithe leanai do leanai scoile a mheadú, dá réir sin.

F. 6 Molann an Grúpa Oibre go spreagfar na grúpaí a fuair cúnamh deontais do sheirbhísí seisuitnachta cúram leanain faoin CCCL, chun a raon seirbhísí a mheadú a thuilleadh, agus chun úsáid a n-aitreabh a uasmhéadú dá réir.

F. 7 Molann an Grúpa Oibre go dtabharfar tacaoíocht phrímeála do ghrúpaí dá shórt chun costas na mbreismhíreanna caipitil is gá chun freastal ar an ngrúpa níos sine a chlúdach.

F. 8 Molann an Grúpa Oibre, freisin, go n-úsáidfear áitribh agus tailte scoileanna le cúram leanai d’aois scoile a sheachadh, sa chás go bhfuil údarásí bhainistiochta na scoileanna sásta na háitribh sin a chur ar fáil ar léas fadteármach nó ar ghealltánaí fadteármach eile a chinnnteoidh go mbeidh na haiseanna ar fáil ar feadh lín réasúnta blianta.

F. 9 Molann an Grúpa Oibre go mbeidh aon áis Chúram Leanain d’Aois Scoile a lonnaitear i suíomh scoile ar aonchaighdeán leis an ardsonraiocht leanbhdhirithe a mholtar i gcás áiseanna neamhspleácha d’aois scoile nó na gnéithe sin de chúram leanain d’aois scoile atá i seirbhísí comhtháite.

F. 10 Molann an Grúpa Oibre go spreagfar lucht tionscadal tógála na nuascolleanna chun ais churaim leanain d’aois scoile a ionchorprú iontu.

F. 11 Molann an Grúpa Oibre go gceadófaí do sholathróirí priobháideacha an chúram leanain, a fuair deontas cheana féin d’áitreabhadh amháin, iarraithe a dhéanann ar bhreistaiocht príomhchóta don áitribh céanna, chun costas na mbreismhíreanna caipitil do sheirbhísí chúram leanain d’aois scoile a chlúdach, ar acht go mbeidh an tseirbhís sin ar fáil ar feadh cúig lá na seachtaine agus caoga seachtain na bliana. (Bheadh maoiniú breise dá shórt faoi réir socraíthe go gcomhlíonfar rialacha Chúnamh Stáit an Aontais Eorpaigh, a leagann síos an t-usasmhíéd cúnaimh deontais is feidir a sholáthar don earnáil phriobháideach)
Caighdeán an Chúraim Leanáid d’Aois Scoile

G.1 Is leir don Ghrúpa Oibre um Chúram Leanáid d’Aois Scoile go bhfuil a chuid oibre á tionscnamh aige ag an am a bhfuil cùram leanáid d’aois scoile atá ionadbhunaithe i dtús a ré in Éirinn. Da réir sin, creideann an Grúpa Oibre go bhfuil Éire anois i riocht taobhú ó thuas leis na caighdeáin idirnáisiúnta is airde don earnáil.

G.2 Molann an Grúpa Oibre nach gcuirfear tacaíocht deontais ar fáil ach amháin do sholáthóirí cúraim leanáid atá sásta clár cúraim leanáid d’aois scoile a sheachadh ar bhonn cuimsitheach, ag tabhairt aghaidh ar riachtanais shóisialta, fhisiciúla, fhorisbah, chaithimh aimsire agus chruithiúcha an linbh i dtímeapallacht shonásach chomhghráideach.

G.3 Tá roinnt príomhghnéithe ann a chuireann le seachadadh an ardcúraighdeán seirbhíise i gcúram leanáid d’aois scoile. Cuimsíonn siadsan an clár gniomhaochta agus an tábhacht a bheith ann leis an sguaradha; an tímeapallacht fhisicíúil; rialú cúram leanáid d’aois scoile; oiliúint don earnáil; an gaol idir soláthóirí cúraim leanáid d’aois scoile, na cliantleanáid, a dtuismitheoirí agus, ó am go ham, na scoileanna.

G.4 Is é dearadh an Ghrúpa Oibre gur gá prionsabail fholláin a thacaíonn le seachadadh an cuimsitheach agus le rannpháirtíocht mar bhonn le seirbhísí dá shórt. Tá tabhacht ar leith leis na coincheapa seo a leanas:

- Tá a gcearta laistigh den tseirbhís ag leanáid agus ag aosaigh.
- Is cóir go mbéadh Cairt na Náisiúin Aontaithe um chearta an linbh agus um Straitéis Náisiúnta na Leanáid mar bhonn le haghaidh agus éiteas na seirbhíise.
- Tá rochtain ar shaol na seirbhíise agus rannpháirtíocht innti ar fáil ag gach páirtí leasmhara.
- Fighléimionn agus fóbraíonn leanáid i gcomhtheachas pobail chomhghráideach a bhfuil meaigh aige ar a nirt indibhidiúla agus ar a nirt chomhcheangailte.
- Cothaíonn náisid idir an leanbh, an teaghlach, an tseirbhís agus an mórphobal mothú aitheantaí agus muintearais.
- Cothaítear goaol chomhaíse agus aithnítear go bhfuil siad ag croílár shaol na seirbhíise.
- Déantar plé a bhfuil eifeacht léi idir leanáid, foireann agus tuismitheoirí.
- Cloistear guth an linbh, bionn meais air agus cuireann sé leis an tseirbhís.
- Bionn iogaireacht agus freaghracht ag baint le hídirghníomhartha.
- Cothaíonn éiteas agus cleachtas na seirbhíise meas ar ilghnéitheacht agus ar chomhchomhinannas.
- Bionn an clár oiriúnach, ón taoibh culúrtha agus sóisialta de, do leanáid, do theaghlacht agus do fhoireann atá páirtíochta sa tseirbhís.
- Oibríonn an fhóireann agus na leanáid le chéile ar bhealaí atá measúil agus cuimsitheach.
- Cosnaithear leanáid ar bhualaitheacht agus ar dhrochbide.
- Cuireann an tímeapallacht dheisanna fighlaimh ar fáil.
- Is cóir go soláthróidh an tseirbhís dheisanna le haghaidh eachtraí dearfacha a thacaíonn le fighlaimh, forbaírt agus dea-bhailiú chath.
- Is cóir go gcroíodh an clár roghanna saoil slaintiúla.
- Is cóir go dtairgríodh an clár dheisanna dúshlán agus fiontair.
- Is cóir go mbéidh an clár tairbheach do leanáid ó thaobh caithimh aimsire agus oideachais de.
- Is cóir go mbéidh leithne, doimhneacht agus cothromaíocht sa clár.
An Clár Gníomhachtaí agus Tábhacht an tSúgartha.

H.1 Aithnítear an súgradh mar buncheart daonna ag gach leanbh. D'athdhearbhaigh Coinbhinsiún na Náisiún Aontaithe um Chearta an Linbh, a dhaingnigh Éire i 1992, tábhacht an tsúgartha. Leagann Alt 31 amach ceart súgartha an linbh.

"Aithníonn na páirtithe cearta an linbh chun sosa agus foililoicthe, a bheith páirteach in imeachtaí súgarth, agus caithimh aimsire ata oiriúnach d'aois an linbh agus saorpháirt a ghlacadh sa saol cultúrtha agus sna healaíona: caithfidh páirtení ómós a thabhairt do chearta an linbh a bheith lánpháirtíteach sa saol cultúrtha agus ealaíonta agus soláthar comhdheiseanna cuí a spreagadh le haghaidh imeachtaí cultúrtha, ealaiona, caithimh aimsire agus foililoicthe."

H.2 Tacaíonn an Grúpa Oibre go hiomlán leis an dealcadh go bhfuil ait lárnach ag an súgradh i bhfás agus i bhforbairt shláintiúil leanaithe. Mar sin de, tá an Grúpa Oibre ag déanamh gur gá go mbeadh fócas láidir ar shúgradh mar chroíphrionsabal agus, le fírinne, mar thréith shonrach de chúram leanaithe d'aois scoile.

H.3 Molann an Grúpa Oibre go bpleanáilteach agus go soláthróidh an tseirbhís churaim leanaithe d'aois scoile raon deiseanna agus gníomhachtaí súgartha a chothú achmainní sóisialta, fisiciúla, intleachtúla, cruthaíochta agus mothúcháin na leanaithe.

H.4 Molann an Grúpa Oibre go gcuirfidh an tseirbhís churaim leanaithe d'aois scoile tréimhse ama ar leataobh gach seachtain chun cabhrú le leanaithe agus le cleachtóirí oibriú le chéile chun imeachtaí san am atá thart a athbhreithintiú agus chun clar imeachtaí a fhorbaír d' oibreachtaí le teacht.

H.5 Molann an Grúpa Oibre gur cóir aithint leanaithe, agus cürsaí súgartha leanaithe a bplean, meascán deiseanna go rathúil agus súgartha struchtúrtha a thairiscint.

H.6 Cé go bhfuil Clubanna d'Obair Bhaile lasmuigh de scóip na Tuarascála seo, go minic soláthraíonn seirbhísí cúram leanaithe d'aois scoile, mar chuid dá raon seirbhíse, aiseanna, cabhair agus maoirsiú do leanaithe chun obair bhaile a chriochnú. Cé go nglacann an Grúpa Oibre d'obair bhaile a bheith mar chuid de raon imeachtaí laistigh de seirbhísí chúram leanaithe d'aois scoile, molann sé nach mbeidh an tacaíocht d'obair bhaile i bhfeidhm buachailleach ag seirbhísí chúram leanaithe d'aois scoile, molann an Grúpa Oibre gur mbeidh sé fior-thábhachtach plé a dhéanamh le tuismitheoirí agus leanaithe maidir le hobair bhaile.

H.7 Molann an Grúpa Oibre gur cóir ionad a dhéanamh don fhoirneacht i suimh cüraim leanaithe d'aois scoile, faoi chúinsí a chuimseoidh:

- dea-chleachtas;
- maoirsiú cuí;
feasacht maidir le cumais an linbh;
gníomhiochtai cuí;
cumarsáid agus muinín idir tuismitheoirí agus an soláthróir, agus idir an leabhaigh agus an soláthróir;
oilriúnt agus cáiliochtaí ábhartha den soláthróir gníomhiochta;
measúnú príacail i gcás gáis gníomhiochta diongabháilte; agus
cumhdach áraichais cuí.

H.8 Molann an Grúpa Oibre go nglaicfaidh cleachtóirí cúrainn leanaithe d'aois scoile leis na prionsabail idirchultúir agus ilghnéitheacha ata ag Sainghrúpa Oibre C2000, sa chlár imeachtaí agus dearrchaí atá atá a fhóbarait acu ina n-aiseanna. Is cóir sin a bheith cuimsitheach, sa mhéid go gcuimsíonn sé daoine le riachtanais speisialta agus daoine a bheadh imeallaithe ina easnamh, de bharr míchumais nó a mballráidh i ngrúpa eitneach mionlaigh, lena n-aíritear an Lucht Taistil.

H.9 Molann an Grúpa Oibre go mbeidh meas ag an áis churaim leanaithe d'aois scoile ar éiteas ilghnéitheach an tsochaí Éireannach, agus go mbeadh cur chuige dearfach aici i leith na Gaeilge agus chultúr na hÉireann.

I. Príomhcheisteanna eile a bhfuil Tionchar acu ar Sheirbhís Ardchaíghdeáin.

I.1 Déanann an Grúpa Oibre na moltaí seo maidir le dearadh fisiciúil aise le hagachaidh cúraim leanaithe d'aois scoile:

Is cóir go dtairgfidh an áis timpeallacht gheal theoláidh;
Is cóir go mbeidh si inrochtana ag leanaí faoi mhichumais;
Is cóir go mbeidh raon seomraí nó líomhstaí a éascóidh níos mó ná gníomhiocht amháin ag an leabhagh nó a grúpa leanaithe san am céanna;
Is cóir go soláthróidh sí leór dhuineachtaí spóirt agus drámaíochta, a éascá nuair a cuí;
Is cóir go soláthróidh sí limistear i cuín don léitheoireacht, d'imeachtait bordbhunaithe agus d'obair bhaile;
Is cóir go ndearfar gach limistear ar shlí gur féidir maoirsiú éasca neamhfhuanntú a dheanamh.
Is cóir go mbeidh solas nádurtára ag fháil i ngach seomra, oiread agus is féidir;
Is cóir go mbeidh rochtain ag gach áis ar limistear súghartha lamhuigh;
Is cóir go mbeidh stóras sásúil ag gach áis chun an limistear a choingeal chomh saor ó thranglam agus is féidir;
Is cóir i a bheith glán, dea-choinnithe;
Is cóir i a bheith déa-inmhithe chun teagaisc agus ciusanna a choingeal;
Is cóir go gcuimsceoidh sí limistear cistine inar féidir bia agus dochanna te a ullmhú agus a stótréal do leanaithe ata eis an lacaí scoile;
Is cóir go mbeidh áiseanna leithris cúchóirithe inti.

I.2 Molann an Grúpa Oibre go n-ullmhoidh gach áis le hagachaidh cúraim leanaithe d'aois scoile raitheas a chuimhseodh beartais agus gnáthaimh chuimsitheacha sláinte agus sábháilteacha a bhaineann, inter alia, le

Sainaithint, láimhseáil agus tuairisciú timpiste;
Leas agus cosaint leanaithe;
Breoi teachtait;
Cleachtait Chéadchabhreach;
Maoirseacht;
Usáid trealaimh inghuaise;
Seiceáil rialta ar shábháilteacht trealaimh;
Fadhanna iompair; agus
Cleachtais sláinteacha.

1.3 Ag teacht leis na Treoirínté Náisiúnta Leanáí ar dTús maidir le Cosaint agus Leas Leanáí agus “Ar nDualgas Cúram”, is cóir do gach soláthróir cúram leanáí a gháthaimh agus treoracha aitíula féin a fhobhairt chun plé le cosyaint leanáí agus is cóir na gnáthaimh seo a chur in iúl do gach ball forir sa tslí go mbeidh siad feasach orthu.

1.4 Is cóir go mbeidh leorchlúdach árachais ar chuid teagmhais a chur i mbráthar agus a thabhairt le gach ás chúram leanáí, síneach a thabhairt le gach treorachta féin a fhóraí sa tír. Is cóir go mbeidh idir bhainistíocht agus foireann feasach ar árachas na háise, agus gach imeacht nach dtagann faoi théarmaí an árachais sin a sheachaint.

1.5 Molann an Grúpa Oibre go gcuirfear gnáthaimh i bhfeidhm i ngach suíomh, chun spiorad an chromhoibrithe a chothú idir tuismitheoirí agus bainistí teoirí seirbhísí agus cleachtóirí cúram leanáí; chun roint leasúnach an eolais le tuismitheoirí a eascú; agus chun rochtain na dtuiscint heascú a éiscú i ngach am cuí ar an áis chúram leanáí d'aois scoile agus ar na cleachtóirí.

1.6 Ina chuid oibre i 1999, phléigh Sainghrúpa Oibre C2000 argointí i bhfabhar agus in aghaidh fáisnéise agus clárúcháin cúram leanáí, agus rinne sé cinneadh i bhfabhar clárúcháin, a chur seo a leanas in iúl:

“Éilíonn clárúchán ar an Stát seirbhís a chlárú nó a cheadhú ó thaobh caighdeán ìosta a shaolú. Tugann sé cumhacht do mhbachtaí cúram leanáí a bhíonn i bhfeidhm i bpiontar geared chun gur cumhacht bás mhor a fháil.”

1.7 Ba de thoradh an dearcaidh seo a rinneadh an Sainghrúpa Oibre a chéad mholadh, atá formhumhuithe agus athluaite ag an nGrúpa Oibre um Chúram Leanáí d’Aois Scoile, a mholann leasú ar an reachtaitocht phríomhhuíl (an tAcht um Chúram Leanáí, 1991) d’fhonn rialú an chúram leanáí d’aois scoile a chuimsiú.

1.8 Maidir le hábhar aon Rialachán nó Treoirínté nua le haghaidh Rialú Deonach na hEarnála um Chúram Leanáí d’Aois Scoile, molann an Grúpa Oibre go gcaghaidh an tsiúrta é i dtreo go leanfar go dlúth na rialacha agus na treoirínté a ncothtar tar eis atbhreithniú a chéile. Spragfadh sé na háiseanna le caighdeán ar dhaonadh i bhall amach agus a choinneáil, agus ar dhaonachd caighdeán cúram leanáí a sholáthar dá dhábh.

1.9 Molann an Grúpa Oibre go mbeidh coibhneas 1 aosach in aghaidh 8 leanáí i gceist do chúram leanáí d’aois scoile atá ionadbhunaithe.

1.10 Cé gur luadh cheana gur gá an reachtaíocht phriosmuil a leasú le nach gcuirfidh si b’fhac ar rialú cúram leanáí d’aois scoile, molann an Grúpa Oibre go gceapfar cóid de chaighdeain dheonacha agus go bhfeidhmiseofar príosnaí faoi cheartaí deonacha chun go mbeidh ar chumas aiseanna le haghaidh cúram leanáí d’aois scoile, faoi cheartaí a thabhairt dá nBord Sláinte. Spragfadh sé na háiseanna le caighdeán arda a bhaint amach agus a choinneáil, agus ar dhaonadh caighdeán cúram leanáí a sholáthar dá thbharr.

1.11 Faoina thearmaí tagartha, iarradh ar an nGrúpa Oibre treoirínté a fhobairt do tháinne. Tá siadsan forbartha anois ar bhonn moltaí na tuarascála seo agus luitear iad in aguisin leas an tuarascáil. In éagaimse rialú na hearann a cúram leanáí d’aois scoile,
molann an Grúpa Oibre go n-úsáidfeanar na treoirlínte seo mar chaidheáin cáiliochta trin ar féidir iarratais ar chúnamh deontais faoin CCCL a mheas agus go bhforbrófar a thuilleadh iad mar chaidheáin deonach don earnáil chúram leanaí d'aois scoile.

I.12 Molann an Grúpa Oibre um Chúram Leanaí d'Aois Scoile go gcuirfidh Coisti Cúraim Leanaí na Cathrach/án Chontae, nuair is cuí, riachtanais iompair na ngrúpaí cúraim leanai in iúl do thionscadail an Tionscnaimh Iompair Thuaithe ina gcondaetha ar leith.

I.13 Molann an Grúpa Oibre um Chúram Leanaí d'Aois Scoile go dtionscnóidh an Roinn Iompair reacthtaocht mairid le gnáthaimh sábháilteachta agus mairid le árachas chun sainghrúpaí daoine (leanaí san áireamh) a iompar.

I.14 Molann an Grúpa Oibre um Chúram Leanaí d'Aois Scoile go ndéanfaidh an Roinn Oideachais agus Eolaíochta athbhreithniú ar rialacha na Scéime Iompair Scoile, d'fhonn an soláthar iompair ó scoileanna chuig áiseanna cúraim leanai d'aois scoile a éascú.

J. Oiliúint le haghaidh Cúraim Leanaí d'Aois Scoile

J.1 Tharraing an Grúpa Oibre aird ar an oiliúint a thugtar do chleachtóirí an Chúraim Leanaí d'Aois Scoile i roinnt tíortha eile. Thug sé faoi dearth, freisin, an cur chuige mairid le hoiliúint agus an gnó a chur ar bhonn gairmiúil sa Chreadtóiciméid Eisemlárách a d'ullmhaigh Fo-Ghrúpa Chomhlachtaí Deimhnithe an CCNCL.

J.2 Is é dearcadh an Ghrúpa Oibre gur chóir go mbeidh na cumhas ghairemíúla seo a leanas ag cleachtóir an chúram leanai d'aos scoile chun feidhmiú go héifeachtach in earnáil an chúraim leanai d'aois scoile:

An cumas le

● dea-chleachtas a fhorfheidhmiú agus oibridiú go héifeachtach i suíomh leanai d'aois scoile;
● sainróil chleachtóir an chúraim leanai d'aois scoile a thuiscint;
● a bheith eolach ar theoirlínte agus ar gnáthaimhchosanta leanai agus ábalta iad a fhorfheidhmiú nuair is ábhartha;
● cuidiú le pleannáil, forfheidhmiú agus measúnú thimpeallacht an chúraim leanai d'aois scoile;
● gach gné d'hforbairt, d'oiseachais agus de chúram leanai a thuiscint agus a chothú;
● féiniúlacht agus ilghnéitheacht a aithint agus a chothú i ngach leanbh, agus idir chomhhdheiseann agus cleachtas frithleatrom a chothú;
● oibridiú go héifeachtach mar chuid d'hhoireann;
● a thuiscint go bhfuil sé tábhachtach comhairle a ghlacadh le leanai, tuismitheoirí agus comhghleacaithe;
● naise a bhunú agus a choineáil idir scoileanna, seirbhísí eile a bhféadfadh leanai rochtain orthu (spórt, rince etc.), agus an mórphobal;
● a bheith feasach ar gach reacthtaocht mairid le leanai, comhionannas, leatrom agus sláinte is sábháilteachta, agus in ann iad a fhorfheidhmiú nuair is ábhartha; agus
● gach taifead ábhartha a bhunú agus a choineáil.

J.3 Tá luaite cheana ag an nGrúpa Oibre go bhfuil sé tábhachtach go n-aithreofait riachtanais
forbartha speisialta na leanáí a bhfuil cúram leanáí d'aos scoile á fháil acu. Éilíonn cothú na riachtanas seo go mbeadh sraith scileanna speisialta ag cleachtóir an chúram leanáí d'aos scoile. Is é dearadh an Grúpa Oibre é gur chóir go mbeadh na scileanna seo a leanas ag cleachtóir an chúram leanáí d'aos scoile d'honn feidhmí go héifeachtach in earnáil an chúram leanáí d'aos scoile.

An scil chun

- gaol a chothú le leanáí, a dtuismitheoirí agus a gcúramóirí;
- riachtanais forbartha éagsúla leanáí agus daoine óga atá ag baint leasa as an tseirbhís le haghaidh cúram leanáí d'aos scoile a thuiscint agus a chothú;
- tacú le rannpháirtí agus bainteachas leanáí le saol na seirbhise;
- timpeallachta shábháilte spreagúil a chinntiú;
- neamhspleachas linbhe a oithint agus é a nach aithint, agus soláthar a dhéanamh dó;
- feinnséadacht a chothú, ag cur riachtanais forbartha a chur in earnáil an Chúram Leanaí d'aos scoile;
- iompar cothrom comhthábhacht a chothú;
- feasacht chultúrtha an linbh a fhósniú agus feinmhuinte agus a tharla agus
- cumas roghnaithe agus feinmhuinte a chothú.

J.4 Molann an Grúpa Oibre go bhforbrófar sainchineal oiliúna a chumasóidh cleachtóirí cúram leanáí le seirbhís ardchaighdeáin a sholáthar a fhreasóidh ar an ngrúpa leanáí más sín, ó cheithre blianta go dtráth blianta déag, ar aon tuaiscint go mbainfheadh siad leas as cúram leanáí d'aos scoile. Ag cur san áireamh nádúr caithimh aimsire an chúram leanáí d'aos scoile, is cóir go mbeadh fócas éifeachtach praiticiúil ag na clára oiliúna atá le forbairt, cé go bhfuil sé tábhachtach go gcuirfí san áireamh, freisin, an t-ábhar teoiriciúil atá fhorbairt gan i gceannasacht chun cleachtóirí cúram leanáí dea-oilte a ullmhú agus chun cúram leanáí d'aos scoile a chur ina chomhthéacs cuí.

J.5 Molann an Grúpa Oibre go gcuimseofaí na scileanna agus an t-eolas seo a leanas sna cúrsaí agus modúil atá le forbairt d'earnáil an Chúramaí Leanáí d'Aos Scoile:

- Cleachtas ardchaighdeán in gceart leanáí d'aos scoile;
- Súgradh agus gniomhataochtaí;
- Forbairt an linbh;
- Sláinte agus sábháilteacht, lena n-aírtear cosaint an linbh;
- Taithí oibre;
- Ról cleachtóirí an chúram leanáí d'aos scoile; agus
- Forbairt ghairmiúil phearsanta.

K. An Bealach Chun Cinn

K.1 Molann an Grúpa Oibre go rachfar i mbun feachtais chun tuiscint ar earnáil an chúramaí leanáí d'aos scoile a mheádú, feasacht a chothú faoi gcearteacht deontais atá ar fáil, agus grúpaí pobail, scileanna agus údarais bhainistíochtaí agus na cleachtóirí cúram leanáí atá ann, idir grúpaí pobail agus sotharóirí priobháideachta, a chothú agus a spreagadh chun smaioneamh ar na seirbhise fhorbairt leis an chúramaí leanáí d'aos scoile.

K.2 Is eol don Ghrúpa Oibre go bhfuil sainordú látaird ag na Coistí Cúramaí Leanaí Cathrach/Contae ón gCoiste Comhordaithe Náisiúnta um Chúramaí Leanaí, feidhmí go le lucht leasa
áitiúil chun cúram leanaí a fhorbairt a fhreastlóidh ar na riachtanais áitiúla maidir le cúram leanaí. Molann an Grúpa Oibre go n-iarrfar ar na Coistí Cúram Leanaí Cathrach/Contae ról suntasach a ghlacadh ag obair agus ag tacú le grúpai pobail, le soláthróirí cúram leanaí priobháideacha agus le húdaráis scoileanna ar fud a gcathracha/geontaetha, d’fhonn aiseanna le haghaidh cúram leanaí d’aois scoile a fhorbairt a fhreastlóidh ar na riachtanais chúram leanaí atá ag tuismitheoirí atá i bhfostaíocht, in oideachas agus in oiltúint, agus a dteastaíonn cúram leanaí lasmuigh d’uaireanta scoile uathu dá leanaí atá ar scoil.

K.3 Molann an Grúpa Oibre go gcothóidh na Coistí Cúram Leanaí Cathrach/Contae agus na hEagraíochtaí Náisiúnta Deonacha um Chúram Leanaí, de réir mar is cuí, feasacht maidir leis na treoirlínte a d’fhiaultar an Grúpa Oibre chun Earnáil ardchairdeáin um Chúram Leanaí d’Aois Scoile a fhorbairt.

L. Treoirlínte

L.1 De réir a theármait tagartha agus ar bhonn a chuid taighde agus na thorthaí uaithi, tá treoirlínte forbartha ag an nGrúpa Oibre a leagann síos príomhtháisairí chun Seirbhís ardchaighdeáin um Chúram Leanaí d’Aois Scoile a fhorbairt a chabhróidh le grúpaí pobalbhunaithe neamhbrabús, agus le soláthróirí priobháideacha a smaoiniódh ar tacúisc dhéontaithe a lorg chun seirbhisí a fhorbairt faoin gClár Comhdheiseanna um Chúram Leanaí 2000-2006.

L.2 Tá na treoirlínte le fáil in Aguisín 2.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT
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1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 The National Childcare Co-ordinating Committee (NCCC), chaired by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (D/JELR), oversees the development of an integrated childcare infrastructure throughout the country. It addresses specific policy issues and through its various sub-groups develops and informs national strategic actions in the sector, such as training and certification, diversity and inter-culturalism. Membership comprises representatives of the statutory and non-statutory sectors including the Social Partners and the National Voluntary Childcare Organisations (NVCOs).

1.1.2 In June 2001, the NCCC established a Working Group on School Age Childcare with a remit to:

- review existing provision for school age childcare, in Ireland and in other jurisdictions;
- develop guidelines on quality standards for school age childcare;
- make proposals for the development of school age childcare services, on an all year round basis, taking into account the diverse forms of such childcare; and
- report to the National Childcare Co-ordinating Committee on these issues.

1.1.3 Members of the NCCC were invited to participate in or nominate representatives to the Working Group. Details of the far-reaching membership of the Working Group are given in Appendix 1. The Working Group was chaired by Margaret O’Connor, Principal, Childcare Directorate, D/JELR to November 2001 and by Pauline Moreau, Principal, Childcare Directorate, D/JELR thereafter.

1.1.4 In addition a number of others made a contribution to the work through participation in meetings as alternates to members. The active participation of all members in the lively debate was most welcome.

1.1.5 The Working Group on School Age Childcare met on 18 occasions. Its work was assisted in the early stages by Ms. Esther Pugh, Consultant.

1.2 Contexts - Partnership 2000 Expert Working Group on Childcare

1.2.1 An Expert Working Group on Childcare was established in 1997 under Partnership 2000 to develop a strategy which would integrate the different strands of arrangements for the development and delivery of childcare and early educational services. The principal reason the P2000 Expert Working Group was convened at that time stemmed from the fact that changed social and economic conditions and expectations in Ireland had resulted in more women opting to combine work and family responsibilities at a time when the availability of childminders and places in childcare centres was contracting.

1.2.2 The Partnership 2000 (P2000) Expert Working Group was chaired by the D/JELR and had wide ranging terms of reference and a broad membership of seventy members, drawn from Government Departments, statutory bodies, the social partners, non-governmental organisations, the childcare sector and parents.
1.2.3 The P2000 Expert Working Group decided that its ‘childcare’ remit related to the provision of day care facilities and services for pre-school children and school-going children out of school hours and further noted that it includes services offering care, education and socialisation opportunities for children to the benefit of children, parents, employers and the wider community. Thus the work of the P2000 Expert Working Group related to pre-schools, naíonraí, day care services, crèches, play groups, childminding and after-school groups but excluded schools (primary, secondary or special) and residential centres for children.

1.2.4 The P2000 Expert Working Group published a comprehensive report in which it laid down a series of principles which should underpin the delivery of childcare services in Ireland and a set of recommendations for the development and implementation of a seven year strategic plan for childcare.

1.2.5 In relation to School Age Childcare, the P2000 Expert Working Group noted that

“There is a growing need for locally based programmes which provide children with social, recreational and development activities outside school hours and during holiday time. This need arises because of women’s increased labour force participation and because of the diminishing supply of part-time childcare places. Such provision could be provided on school premises or in community buildings.

The development of this sector also requires attention to the training needs of childcare personnel working with 6 - 12 year olds.”

1.2.6 Although there have been some small moves, often locally driven, to expand the provision of School Age Childcare to meet the needs of working parents, as this Report will show, there has been no concerted effort by any group to make available a broad range of childcare services to meet the needs of working or studying parents whose children are attending education and whose school hours do not link with the hours of employment or education of the parents.

1.3 Contexts - National Development Plan 2000 - 2006

1.3.1 The National Development Plan 2000 - 2006 (NDP) made available the financial resources to facilitate the development of childcare as a measure for social inclusion and the advancement of labour force opportunities. The Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme 2000 - 2006 (EOCP) was incorporated as a key Sub-Measure of the Social Inclusion Measures in each of the Regional Operational Programmes within the NDP. The Programme offers the framework within which all supply aspects of childcare are being advanced in accordance with the recommendations of the P2000 Expert Working Group.

1.3.2 The NDP initially made available €317.4 million for the development of Childcare over the period 2000 - 2006. Following discussions with the social partners in October 2000, additional Exchequer funding of €50.79 million was announced for the further development of childcare of which €34 million was initially made available to the D/JELR. The balance of this new tranche of funding was provided to four other Government Departments, including resources for the development of school age childcare which were made to the Departments of Education and Science and the then Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs. In March 2001, the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Inclusion transferred responsibility for this funding for school age childcare (some €85 million) to the D/JELR.
1.3.3 The Mid Term Review of the performance of the Childcare Measures of the Regional Operational Programmes and the National Development Plan (and of the other elements of these Programmes) led to an increase in the allocation of funding for the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme, bringing its total funding package to €449.3 million. The demand from community based not for profit groups for capital grant assistance to develop new childcare services in areas where there were service gaps also led to a further increase of €50 million in the capital allocation for the present phase of the EOCP. This brings the budget to €499.3 million over the seven Programme years from 2000 to 2006 to facilitate the development of childcare facilities to meet the employment, training and educational needs of the parents of Ireland.

1.3.4 The EOCP 2000 - 2006 makes grant assistance available for the creation of new and the enhancement of existing childcare places being provided by community/not for profit groups or by private childcare providers. The level of funding varies depending upon the ownership structure. The EOCP also makes grant assistance available to assist with the staffing costs of community/not for profit organisations which have a strong focus on disadvantage. A third element of the EOCP relates to quality improvement which is being supported through a range of interventions including the National Voluntary Childcare Organisations and the City and County Childcare Committees.

1.4 Contexts - Administrative Structures for Childcare

1.4.1 The P2000 Expert Working Group on Childcare also made a series of recommendations on the structures which were appropriate to oversee the implementation of its recommendations. Among the recommended structures was the establishment of a National Committee whose functions would include, inter alia, the development of national guidelines on quality standards for provision and on the development of national guidelines on training.

1.4.2 The NCCC was established in December 1999 with a broad remit focusing on both policy and operational issues. This includes, inter alia, a requirement to develop a co-ordinated national approach to childcare provision and to initiate appropriate structures for the delivery of the childcare measures under the NDP.

1.4.3 The NCCC has established a number of Sub-Groups and Working Groups to undertake specific tasks. The Working Group on School Age Childcare is one such Group.

1.4.4 Following the decision to provide considerable support to develop Childcare in Ireland, a new Childcare Directorate was established within the Equality Division of the D/JELR. The purpose of the Childcare Directorate is to enhance the quality of childcare provision and increase the availability of childcare places for parents and children throughout Ireland, availing of funding provided through the NDP and to continue to develop and support a well-structured, proactive and caring childcare sector. The D/JELR has responsibility for the delivery of the EOCP 2000 - 2006 and its day to day operation is undertaken by Area Development Management Ltd on behalf of the Department.
1.5 Work of the Working Group on School Age Childcare

1.5.1 Following the resignation of its consultant, efforts were made to recruit a substitute consultant to further develop the work on hand. These proved fruitless and the Childcare Directorate undertook the research and executive work itself. Considerable use was made of Internet research to identify research and policy work undertaken and developments in the provision of school age childcare in other countries. This research has informed the discussions of the Working Group.

1.5.2 A number of members of the Working Group also agreed to undertake research on specific issues of interest to the broader membership and these contributions were both invaluable and welcome.

1.5.3 The meetings of the Working Group took place in a spirit of lively debate and discussion and again the openness of the participants has helped to contribute to the collective recommendations of the Working Group.

1.6 Acknowledgments

1.6.1 The Working Group would like to acknowledge the role of its Chair, Ms. Pauline Moreau, Principal, Childcare Directorate, Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform who, following the resignation of the consultant, undertook the research and analysis which underpins this Report and drafted the Report with the support of the Secretariat.

1.6.2 The Working Group would also like to acknowledge the significant contribution to its work made by the Secretariat, Ms. Katherine Grace, Higher Executive Officer (until September 2002) and thereafter by Ms. Mary Burke, Administrative Officer and Mr. Damian McKeon, Higher Executive Officer of the Childcare Directorate, Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.
CHAPTER 2
WHAT IS SCHOOL AGE CHILDCARE?
WHAT IS SCHOOL AGE CHILDCARE?

2.1 School Age Childcare - a new concept?

2.1.1 Centre-based “School Age Childcare” is a relatively new concept in Irish society although it has been widespread in its provision throughout much of mainland Europe for many years and has also expanded considerably in its provision in the United Kingdom (UK) in recent years. Traditionally, childcare has been viewed by policy makers, parents and even by many childcare service providers as a sector which focuses primarily on the needs of children in the age groups between 0 – 6 years, the early or pre-school years. In mainland Europe, this age group equates largely with children who have yet to commence primary school because, in many European countries, particularly the Nordic and Germanic countries, primary school tends to commence at about six or seven years of age.

2.1.2 In Ireland, on the other hand, while education does not become compulsory until the child has attained six years of age, in practice, children normally tend to enter primary school in the September following their fourth birthday. As a result, while Irish four and five year olds are most usually in primary school, their peers in many EU and other countries are still considered to be the clients of childcare services.

2.1.3 This differentiation from most other EU countries has been further reinforced in an Irish context by the implementation of the Child Care Act, 1991\(^2\) and its associated 1996\(^3\) and 1997\(^4\) Regulations in relation to pre-school services. The Child Care Act and its Regulations make provision for the notification and inspection of facilities for pre-school children and lay out guidelines for the provision of services in such facilities. The ‘pre-school child’ is specifically defined as a “child who has not attained the age of six years and who is not attending a national school or a school providing an educational programme similar to a national school.” Accordingly, there is no legal provision in Ireland to cover the delivery of childcare services to children of school going age outside of school hours, even if those children are in an age bracket where their counterparts would still be in childcare in other countries.

2.1.4 In the United Kingdom, on the other hand, the system of notification and inspection covers childcare facilities for all children up to eight years of age. As a result, there are specific guidelines and requirements in relation to the provision of childcare services for children in the age group from about four years to eight years who might be attending a formal childcare facility during that part of the day when they are not in primary school.

2.2 Defining School Age Childcare

2.2.1 The formal definition of school age childcare is not an easy task. There is no widely accepted international definition, largely because of the varying approaches which have evolved in different countries to childcare and to primary school and the lines of demarcation between the two. It has already been noted that, in many European countries, children normally start primary school at a later age than do Irish children and therefore parents are less likely to be faced with the dilemma of finding a further strand of care for their children until the children are six or seven years old.

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2 Child Care Act 1991 (no. 17 of 1991)
3 Childcare (pre-School Services) Regulations
4 Childcare (Pre-School Services) (Amendment) Regulations, 1997
2.2.2 In a 1996 Report, the European Commission Network on Childcare\textsuperscript{5} described School Age Childcare services as

“services which take over the responsibility for children when school is over but parents are not available - whether because they are working or for other reasons.”

The Report noted that these services are an important, specific resource for parents and children. They help parents to reconcile work and family life and offer play, companionship and cultural activities to children.

2.2.3 In an Irish context, there is a need to provide a childcare facility to meet the holistic needs of children whose parents’ work or educational timetables are incompatible with school timetables. To fully address the gaps between school hours and the parents’ timetables, such a childcare service may be required to provide for the care needs of children before school starts in the morning, after school finishes in the afternoon and during school holidays and pre-planned school closures.

2.2.4 Again, in an Irish setting, care for school going children out of school hours and where the parents are unable to provide direct care due to employment or education and training commitments, may be provided by a child minder (either a relative or non-relative and formally or informally), or in a group setting. In Ireland it is not unusual to hear terms such as After-school Care, Out of School Care, After School Clubs, Summer Schemes, Homework Clubs being applied to services which meet the needs of parents of school going children. Some of these terms derive directly from the titles used for services in other countries.

2.2.5 The European Commission Network description closely approximates the definition of the range of services which are seen by the Working Group as falling within the remit on which it is to develop its thinking. Indeed, it may be easier to define what does not fall within the remit of the Working Group as some of the names mentioned above often, but not always, relate to more tightly focused services than are the subject of the present Report. Accordingly, the Working Group sees the definition of School Age Childcare as being wider than the popularly perceived concept of homework clubs. Similarly, its definition is also wider than the provision of a family support type service for the parent or parents in a disadvantaged area - although again, a School Age Childcare facility may include an element of such a service.

2.2.6 The Working Group noted with interest the following common features identified by acknowledged expert Pat Petrie\textsuperscript{6} in defining School Age Childcare in the European context:

- School Age Childcare provision operates on the basis that responsibility is taken for children outside normal school hours and when parents are not available;
- School Age Childcare provision operates on the basis of an agreement between parents and staff, which includes the hours that the children will attend the service; and finally
- Children are not allowed to come and go as they please to and from the service.

2.3 School Age Childcare - a definition for Ireland

For the purposes of this Report and the recommendations therein, the Working Group defines School Age Childcare as being

“Childcare for school going children provided outside of normal school hours where the same children attend the childcare facility on a regular basis and access to the service is clearly defined by agreement with parents and guardians.”

\textsuperscript{5} European Commission Network on Childcare : School Age Childcare in the European Union: 1996
\textsuperscript{6} European Commission Network on Childcare : ibid.
CHAPTER 3
School Age Childcare in Ireland - current provision
SCHOOL AGE CHILDCARE IN IRELAND - CURRENT PROVISION

3.1 Although there has been a significant increase in the provision of early or pre-school childcare places in Ireland in recent years, there has not been a parallel increase in the provision of places to cater for the childcare needs of the school age child outside of school hours. As a result, the majority of parents in Ireland have limited options from which to meet the childcare needs of their school going children outside of school hours. Indeed this deficit is the *raison d'être* for the present Working Group. There is also scant up to date information available on service provision.

3.2 In 1997, the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) carried out a comprehensive survey of childcare which contributed to the discussions of the Partnership 2000 Expert Working Group on Childcare. It found that relatively few mothers with school going children aged 5 to 9 years used childcare. Even among those in full time employment, only 68 per cent of the admittedly small sample reported that they used formal childcare.

3.3.1 The availability of information in relation to School Age Childcare usage in Ireland was greatly enhanced with the publication by the Central Statistics Office in July 2003 of its findings from the special module in relation to Childcare conducted as part of the Quarterly National Household Survey in late 2002.

3.3.2 The Survey shows that 67,500 families of primary school children avail of non-parental childcare for their children. Of these families, the mother or guardian (in the case of a one parent family) in 62,600 families was in employment with only 1,100 mothers/guardians in education. On the basis of the tables, it is estimated that about 125,000 primary school children receive non parental childcare. (As the survey was conducted during term time, this reflects term time usage of childcare).

3.3.3 Turning again to the 67,500 families using non-parental childcare for their primary school children, the CSO survey found that 31,100 (46 per cent) used unpaid relatives; 9,500 (14 per cent) used paid relatives; 21,500 (32 per cent) used paid carers; 4,100 (6 per cent) availed of crèches and 2,900 (3 per cent) used other childcare facilities.

3.4 This confirms the long held view that the most common of all arrangements to care for the school age child outside school hours and during the school term continues to be through a private childminder. The arrangements can be quite informal in many circumstances, often through reliance on a family member, neighbour or friend. Even when remunerated childminders are used, this can also take place through an informal arrangement, where payment may be made in the informal economy and the ‘childminder’ may have little formal training or experience of the provision of a quality childcare programme for this age group. In such circumstances, the child may spend the childcare period in a typical homely setting but with a very limited developmental focus on the activities he or she undertakes.

3.5 Childminders tend to care for one or more children in their own home. At present the smaller scale childminders (those minding fewer than four children) are generally precluded from the requirement to notify the health board of their service. Similarly those caring for school going children are precluded from the requirement to notify because this group of children does not come within the scope of the Child Care (Pre-School Services) Regulations 1996 and the Child Care (Pre-School Services) (Amendment) Regulations 1997.

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7 ESRI : Childcare Arrangements in Ireland : 1997
9 CSO : ibid Table 2
10 D/JELR - on basis of CSO ibid Table 2
3.6.1 Increasing numbers of childminders are beginning to affiliate to Childminding Ireland, the National Childminding Association of Ireland (NCMAI) and are benefiting from the networking and other developmental services which are open to them as members. It is open to childminders of pre-school children who are exempt from the Child Care (Pre-School Services) Regulations to voluntarily notify the health board of their service. Funding was made available to all Health Boards to facilitate the appointment of Childminding Advisory Officers to offer additional supports to childminders who wish to notify their service to their health board.

3.6.2 Many childminders are providing a quality service for the children in their care. The City/County Childcare Committees are also engaging with childminders through the provision of training, networking and information activities. The Working Group notes that the Childcare Directorate has put in place a range of initiatives under the EOCP to support childminders and is of the view that, in the ongoing delivery of these initiatives, cognisance be taken of the role which childminders can play in the care of children of school going age.

3.7 An increasing number of private childcare providers including both full day services and pre-school services have extended their service range to include school age childcare. Crèches may incorporate an element of school age childcare, either combining the older age group with the pre-school group or, increasingly, making separate provision within the day care centre. Preliminary results from a census of childcare facilities undertaken by the Childcare Directorate in 2004 suggest that there are now over 8,000 centre based school age childcare places in Ireland. Preliminary results from the 2004 Annual Beneficiary Study of grant beneficiaries under the EOCP prepared by ADM suggest that some 6,000 children are now availing of school age childcare in services which have received capital or staffing support under the EOCP. These would of course be included in the figure of 8,000 places referred to earlier in this paragraph.

3.8 As demand for school age childcare increases within the childcare sector, there is evidence of an emerging trend of privately provided centres to cater for school age children only. A small proportion of primary schools provide school age childcare as part of the schools’ extended service. These services may be staffed by permanent staff and are frequently only open during term time, although a minority may also provide day care during school closures. Where childcare is not available during extended holidays, services may link in some cases into summer projects or school holiday play schemes.

3.9 Both integrated and separate school age childcare exists as an element of employer provided childcare, as in the case of private daycare provision. However, the level of provision of a school age facility is not universal - indeed, of the sixteen employer-provided childcare initiatives reviewed for this study, only five offered a school age childcare facility and of these, four were Dublin-based.

3.10 As in the case of crèches in private day care, community based school age childcare provision may occasionally be integrated into composite pre- and school age childcare services, either combining the older age group with pre-school or making separate provision.

3.11 The CSO study looks also at the number of hours of paid childcare used by parents of primary school children and found\(^\text{11}\) that on average parents paid for 17.1 hours of childcare per week in 2002.

\(^{11}\) CSO; ibid; Table 8
3.12 The average cost per hour of school age childcare was found to be €4.70 with paid relatives receiving on average €3.56 while there was little significant difference in the hourly cost of childcare provided by paid carers and in crèches at €5.14 and €5.19 respectively. There were regional variations in the costs - from €3.91 per hour across all paid childcare types in the Mid-West to €5.47 in the Dublin area. Significant usage of crèche type school age childcare facilities was confined to three regions - Dublin, the Midlands-East and the Border Region.

3.13 Local summer projects at community level have become a feature of both urban and rural life when school closes in July and August. Organised by local authorities, community groups, parish committees, parents, schools, youth clubs, sports clubs and so forth, they operate from community centres, school grounds, playing fields, health and fitness centres and other such venues. There are also several commercial providers who operate nationwide offering simultaneous specialist activity in different locations. Typically a programme will run for one or two weeks and then repeat. A new client group is taken on with each rotation of the programme. The programme may comprise sporting activities, arts and crafts, games and trips and operate for 4 – 6 hours a day.

3.14 Similarly, local authorities may offer a programme of activities centring on a local sports or community facility. Although frequently used by parents as a substitute for school age childcare, the unco-ordinated/unplanned nature of these activities and their often short day makes them a poor alternative for parents who are unable to access a more structured programme of childcare during the school holidays.

3.15 In recent years there has been a considerable expansion in the provision of breakfast clubs and homework clubs, particularly in areas of disadvantage. Local Partnership Companies, Community Groups and other community groups predominantly operate such clubs in conjunction with Youth Services and other Community Organisations. The Working Group found that in addition to educational support, the provision of such clubs enables complementary education support to primarily disadvantaged school aged children outside school hours. They can generally be divided into three categories:

- Those offering homework support;
- Those offering complementary educational activities with emphasis on building positive relationships with peers and adults and developing intra-personal qualities; and
- Those offering a combination of the two.

3.16 These services usually incorporate elements of physical care through the provision of a meal and a welcoming environment together with social supports and formal or informal educational supports. Notwithstanding the fact that a care element may be found in school-based provision, or more commonly, community based provision, these clubs sometimes define themselves as Out of School Support Services. Their key focus is on educational attainment and social inclusion and therefore they cannot be regarded as school age childcare within the scope of this review.
3.17 Similarly, a number of voluntary and statutory organisations such as Barnardos offer Family Support School Age Childcare as a support to families in disadvantaged areas who are experiencing difficulties by supporting children and families in their own community. As part of its Family Support Service, Barnardos offers after school programmes that give children help with homework in addition to providing a range of childcare facilities with social supports if necessary. However again the focus is on remedial supports and social inclusion rather than on the provision of childcare to enable parents to undertake work or education and therefore these activities are considered to be outside the remit of the Working Group.

3.18 Table 3.1 below identifies key factors relating to the provision of care services or children, differentiating between ‘school age childcare’ which assists parents in their work commitments outside of school hours, services intended principally as educational interventions and services intended principally to offer social and family supports.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>School Age Childcare</th>
<th>Educational support services outside school hours</th>
<th>Child/Family Supports outside school hours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|           | ● Provide a well structured, child centred childcare programme to meet the childcare needs of school going children of parents in employment, education or training | ● Improve educational achievement  
● Diminish disadvantage  
● Prevent early school leaving | ● Promote child development in the context of the family  
● Diminish social exclusion  
● Address family conflict, parenting problems, child welfare and educational under achievement |
| Staff     | ● Childcare Practitioners  
● Childminders | ● Teachers  
● Community Employment Workers  
● Youth Workers | ● Childcare Workers  
● Specialist Professionals |
| Location  | ● Childminders - home-based  
● Private or Community Integrated Nurseries/Crèches  
● Stand alone School Age Childcare Services  
● Schools | ● Schools  
● Community based Services | ● Family Support Services  
● Barnardos Centres  
● Community Services  
● Youth Projects |
The objectives of each service vary as do the professional groups who deliver the different services. While the present study focuses on ‘School Age Childcare’ only, it maybe that the programmes developed in particular School Age Childcare facilities may incorporate elements of the other two services as appropriate to the needs of the individual services and their client base. Nevertheless, the main emphasis in the work of the Working Group is on the provision of a well balanced care programme affording the child the opportunity to avail of a range of developmental and play focused activities outside school hours.
CHAPTER 4
THE PROVISION OF SCHOOL AGE CHILD CARE ELSEWHERE
4.1 In the previous chapter, the diverse range of childcare facilities on offer in Ireland at present was reviewed. In this chapter, the provision of School Age Childcare in other Member States of the European Union and in a number of other countries is explored briefly. It is interesting to note the growing body of literature on the delivery of school age childcare in different countries which has expanded certainly in terms of Internet posted documentation even since the Working Group began its task.

4.2 The structures and arrangements for the delivery of School Age Childcare vary among the Member States of the European Union. The European Commission Network on Childcare (ECNC) and other Measures to reconcile Employment and Family Responsibilities commissioned and published a comprehensive review of the services available in EU Member States, albeit in 1996. The Review sums up the situation as it then applied as follows:

“A number of countries have a strong proactive policy and high levels of provision, notably Denmark, France and Sweden. In other Member States, services in recent years have been increasing from a low baseline (for example, Luxembourg and Portugal); in some cases (for example Netherlands, Flemish Community in Belgium and UK) in response to short-term government initiatives to promote services. A few countries show little sign yet of significant development of formal school age childcare services, for example Ireland, Italy and Spain.”13

4.3 In relation to the organisation and delivery of services, the Review notes that

“Provision takes many forms: organised family daycare, especially for the youngest age groups; school based provision (which may or may not be part of the education system); centres separate from school, in some cases integrating provision for school-age children with provision for younger children. Services may be managed by public authorities or private organisations or often, by a mixture of both. In most countries, provision falls within the welfare system, along with pre-school childcare services; in a few countries (Belgium, Denmark, France) the education system has a direct involvement in managing school age childcare. Generally, as with pre-school childcare services in the welfare system, parents contribute to the costs according to income and family circumstances, usually, however, parents pay only a minority of these costs.”14

4.4 It is interesting to look in detail at some of the different ways in which School Age Childcare is delivered in other EU Member States. The next few paragraphs synopsis aspects of the research carried out by Meijvogel and Petrie in 199615 for ECNC. They show that that there is no ‘one way’ when it comes to School Age Childcare.

13 European Commission Network on School Age Childcare (ENSAC) : School Age Childcare in the European Union: 1996
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
Vlaanderen, Belgium

4.5.1 Like Ireland, Vlaanderen, the federal Flemish speaking region of Belgium, has experienced a period of sustained economic growth. With a population of some 5.9 million it has a significantly higher population density than does Ireland. About two thirds of mothers with children under 15 work and, of these, about two thirds are employed full time. As in Ireland, education is compulsory from the age of six. In Vlaanderen, 95 per cent of children aged three to six attend nursery schooling. School holidays exceed typical annual leave of parents by about eleven weeks annually. In addition schools are shut on a Wednesday afternoon, creating an additional childcare need on those afternoons on a weekly basis.

4.5.2 It is reported that many schools provide care for children both before and after the school day. However it appears that this service has an emphasis on surveillance rather than on a structured childcare programme. Meijvogel and Petrie\(^\text{16}\) report the relatively recent development of a new School Age Childcare service across many of the provinces of Vlaanderen which are independent of the educational system and are organised through the local authorities. This is frequently organised with local authority support to private providers, rather than by direct provision by the local authorities. In one case study in the ENSAC report, mention is made of payment on a half hourly basis by the parents. It appears that there is a strong emphasis on free play with a wide range of options available including many sorts of play materials and toys.

Denmark

4.6.1 Denmark is also like Ireland, in that it has a strong rural community and a population size and profile not unlike Ireland. However it has a very well developed welfare state system (with the accompanying high tax take). The welfare state type approach is reflected in its school age childcare service. Meijvogel and Petrie\(^\text{17}\) tell us that female participation rates in the labour force were the highest in the European Union in the 1990s at over 75 per cent. While education is not compulsory until the child is seven years of age, most children receive a year of part time nursery care when they are six and over 75 per cent of children attend kindergartens and other publicly funded childcare services.

4.6.2 Formerly, school age childcare was provided in age integrated ‘fritidshjems’ or free time homes which were funded by the social welfare authorities and managed either by local authorities or private organisations. Again, services developed towards school linked provision in the late 1990s, which make use of specially designated rooms in schools outside of school time. Considerable emphasis is placed on free play and a wide variety of active and creative crafts are also offered. Of particular note in Denmark is the regime of training for school age childcare - this is provided by a ‘paedagoger’ with three and a half years of training. The curriculum is wide and demanding. Placement is an important element of the training and the trainee is paid for a significant part of the placement.

Great Britain

4.7.1 National Lottery investment has contributed to the increased provision of formal school age childcare in the United Kingdom.
4.7.2 Within England, as part of an overall initiative known as the Kids’ Clubs Network, out of school provision in the UK doubled between 1997 and 2001\(^\text{18}\), when over 7,000 “Kids’ Clubs” offered services to almost 130,000 children and it was intended that the provision would grow to 12,000 facilities catering for 360,000 by the end of 2003, with additional National Lottery investment. These facilities may be school based or independent of the school. The Spring 2002 issue of the Kids’ Clubs Network Review\(^\text{19}\) reported that about a third of schools have an out of school club while a British Government Initiative is making further funding available to promote the greater use of school facilities for a range of purposes including childcare.

4.7.3 In Britain, facilities which provide childcare for children up to eight years are regulated by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED)\(^\text{20}\) and this therefore includes school age childcare facilities for the younger child. In addition, both the OFSTED Regulations and Guidelines and the Kids’ Clubs Network offer detailed recommendations with regard to school age childcare and the Kids’ Clubs Network offers an accreditation facility to Clubs which meet its criteria in order to promote high quality childcare. In 2001 about 10 per cent of Kids’ Clubs had received accreditation and the aim was for 40 per cent to be accredited by the end of 2003. About 40 per cent of staff were childcare qualified in 2001 and again the aim was to increase this to 54 per cent by the end of 2003.

4.7.4 Participation in a Kids’ Club during term time costs about £35 (about €57)\(^\text{21}\) per week and between £75 and £80 (about €120 to €128) per week during the holidays. The 2001 Activity Report comments that only about 20 per cent of parents were availing of the childcare tax credit available to parents in certain circumstances and therefore the majority of parents are meeting the cost of school age childcare without support.

Northern Ireland

4.8.1 PlayBoard has supported the development of School Age Childcare in Northern Ireland through the PlayCare Initiative funded through European Union Special Programme for Peace & Reconciliation since 1996. Under the first round of this funding, PlayCare Clubs were set up across Northern Ireland offering quality play provision for the children of parents who were in turn able to access training, education and employment opportunities safe in the knowledge that their children were being cared for in a quality environment.\(^\text{22}\)

4.8.2 Additional funding has been made available under the second EU Special Programme for Peace and Reconciliation to help bring self sufficiency to the PlayCare Initiative.

4.8.3 Since 1999 PlayBoard has worked with the four Childcare Partnerships in Northern Ireland to create 12,000 Out of School Hours Childcare places sponsored by the New Opportunities Fund (National Lottery). This £12 million (€19 million) investment is now supplemented with a further £6 million pounds (€9.6 million) capital programme “Building Quality Childcare”.

4.8.4 All out of school hours childcare provision for children up to the age of 12 years in Northern Ireland is registered by Early Years teams within the local Health and Social Services Trusts. Registration guidelines come under the Northern Ireland Children Order 1995. PlayBoard underpins its commitment to quality Out of School Hours provision through PlayBoard’s Pathways to Excellence award winning, Quality Assurance Scheme which is endorsed by the Sector Skills kite mark.

18 Kids’ Clubs Network : Annual Review 2001
20 Office For Standards in Education : England and Wales
21 Exchange rate £1 = €1.60
22 Material supplied directly by PlayBoard
4.8.5 Average Fees for children attending out of school childcare is £5 (about €8) daily during term time and £10 (€16) daily during full day opening. Parents can receive tax relief on fees paid to registered providers through Working Family Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit.

4.8.6 PlayBoard is already providing training in the Republic of Ireland in Pathways to Excellence which aims to help play services achieve and maintain environments that are safe, caring, encouraging and challenging. Pathways to Excellence sets clear and defined standards of quality for all aspects of play services, including legislative requirements, creating a child-centred environment, policies and procedures and working with management committees. The pack also strikes a balance between the play and care debate, acknowledging that whilst quality playwork is intrinsically caring, quality care for children has creative and stimulating play opportunities at its heart.

Australia and New Zealand

4.9 New Zealand and Australia have been to the forefront in the development of high quality childcare in the English speaking world and are also well advanced in their thinking on school age childcare.

Australia

4.10.1 The Commonwealth Government in Australia published a detailed Handbook\(^23\) in 2000 outlining its requirements for what it terms “Outside School Hours Care”. Considerable support is available to facilitate new school age childcare projects and also to support the school age childcare needs of parents. The focus of the development model which has been adopted in Australia appears to be quite similar to the Irish funding model, with incentives available to both community/not for profit and to private childcare providers.

4.10.2 To incentivise potential providers, set up grants are provided to new school age childcare providers to meet initial expenses such as insurance, incorporation costs, publicity and other necessary costs. A one off equipment grant is also available to new providers. Special supports are available in areas of special disadvantage and to facilities which are catering for children with additional needs, which includes children with a disability and children from particular ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

4.10.3 Of particular note is the requirement, in Australia, that, to avail of such grant assistance, school age childcare facilities must comply with strict timetabling rules, both in terms of daily opening hours and the number of weeks during which the facility is open.

4.10.4 School age childcare facilities in Australia are supported through the payment of fees for services. However, families who satisfy income and (normally also) Australian residency criteria may receive a Child Care Benefit which may either be paid directly to the service providing childcare or to the parent as a lump sum. This benefit is only payable to parents whose children are availing of childcare provided by approved childcare services or registered informal carers. The detail to hand\(^24\) suggests that the whole administrative system for school age childcare is quite onerous but is very clearly defined, open and transparent.

\(^{23}\) Department of Family and Community Affairs : Australia : Community-based Outside School Hours Care Handbook

\(^{24}\) Ibid : Chapter 7
New Zealand

4.11.1 New Zealand also uses a mix of community based and private providers for its Out of School Care and Recreation (OSCAR) programme. The Programme has received a further injection of funding in recent years in an effort to expand the level of provision and to assist projects which are experiencing difficulties with regard to sustainability with an additional amount of funding being made available for field workers who would provide network support. As in Britain, OSCAR projects appear to be closely networked.

4.11.2 To avail of funding under either of the project specific grant schemes, OSCAR projects must be approved, must satisfy minimum criteria in relation to hours of opening both in term time and in the vacation period and must charge working parents a fee. In addition, those seeking the support grants to remain sustainable must be able to show evidence of the grant need. A number of other quality related criteria are considered at the appraisal stage. Newly established projects may avail of limited grant assistance to meet equipment costs and the cost of building alterations where necessary.

4.12 Looking as it did at the eight countries referred to in the previous paragraphs, the Working Group noted the different approaches being adopted to the delivery and funding of school age childcare. Each approach has its merits and without doubt there is no one correct method for the organisation of the services. However, there are a number of common strands which appear to run through all of the systems:

- The principal focus of the school age childcare service is on the care of children during periods when the parent is at work;
- Irrespective of the existence of State supports, there is an expectation that fees will be levied for the provision of school age childcare services;
- There is a move towards school based services in a number of countries;
- In most countries there is also a mix of provision between community, public and private provision of school age childcare; and
- Where there is such a mix and there are State supports available, the State supports appear to be open to all providers;
- While not specifically referred to in the previous paragraphs, all countries place considerable emphasis on quality, a topic which will be explored in depth later.

4.13 The Working Group concluded that much can be learned from practice in other countries and its recommendations will be influenced by what it sees as good practice in terms of service delivery and quality in the school age childcare services being delivered elsewhere.
CHAPTER 5

THE DEMAND FOR SCHOOL AGE CHILDCARE IN IRELAND
THE DEMAND FOR SCHOOL AGE CHILDCARE IN IRELAND

5.1 At a time of great economic change, it is not easy to predict the demand for School Age Childcare with any great degree of accuracy. Ireland has, as we shall see, undergone major changes in its labour market in recent years while changing economic pressures are requiring ever increasing numbers of mothers to remain in or return to the labour market. As with all economic forecasting, these changes and uncertainties make it difficult to forecast the need for specific social services. However, no matter how tacit the forecasts may be, the Working Group is wholly convinced that there is a need for a substantial increase in the provision of childcare to support the working parents of schoolgoing children.

5.2 Goodbody Consultants Demand Forecasts 1997

5.2.1 The P2000 Expert Working Group on Childcare commissioned Goodbody Consultants to review, the current and future levels of need, demand and supply for and of childcare facilities in Ireland.

5.2.2 The Goodbody Report includes a table (see Table 5.1 below) taken from the 1997 ESRI survey of childcare arrangements which had found that relatively few mothers with school going children aged 5 to 9 years used childcare. Even among those in full time employment, only 68 per cent of the admittedly small sample reported that they use childcare. Among those in the labour market (employed, unemployed or in training or education) less than one per cent used a creche while 18.5 per cent used childminders with a preference for care by a childminder in the child's home among those in full time employment and a preference for care in the childminder's home for parents in part time employment. Those in training and or “unemployed but seeking work” tended to use a paid relative.

| TABLE 5.1 |
| USAGE OF PAID CHILDCARE BY MOTHERS WITH YOUNGEST CHILD AGED 5 TO 9 YEARS 1997 |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother's Economic Status</th>
<th>Home duties</th>
<th>Full time job</th>
<th>Part time job</th>
<th>Unemployed /other</th>
<th>Total (excl. mothers on home duties)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did not use childcare</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>99</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creche/nursery/ kindergarten/other pre-school</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minder in minder's home</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minder in child's home</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid relative</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 309</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ESRI Ibid except last column, derived from the Table

5.2.3 Clearly table 5.1 does not inform us of the reasons why parents in full time employment did not use childcare for their school going children. However the lack of childcare facilities at that time was likely to be very significant.

5.2.4 The Goodbody study gave little attention in its analysis to the childcare needs of school going children, probably because the main focus of the P2000 Expert Working Group (as commissioners of the Goodbody work) had been on pre-school childcare services, and the study recommended, as did the P2000 Expert Working Group, that this particular service required a separate examination.

5.2.5 However, the Goodbody study made an estimate of demand for 51,000 school age childcare places for 5 to 9 year olds in 1996 growing to 67,000 places in 2011, as shown in Table 5.2 below.

**TABLE 5.2**
CURRENT AND FUTURE DEMAND FOR CHILDCARE FOR 5 TO 9 YEAR OLDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type Of Childcare</th>
<th>1996 (000s)</th>
<th>2011 (000s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group Care</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childminder in childminders home</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childminder in child’s home</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>51</strong></td>
<td><strong>67</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source : ESRI Ibid. Table 3.2

5.2.6 This estimate is based on the median scenario posited by Goodbody in its forecasts in the study. The less cautious scenario extrapolates to an 11 per cent higher demand requiring 75,000 school age childcare places in 2011. The Report makes no reference to the older age group of primary school children. In the event that these were also to avail of school age childcare it is likely that they would increase demand by about 60 per cent.

5.3 Growth in the Labour Market and the Demand for Childcare

5.3.1 The growth of the Irish economy over the past decade has led to an unprecedented increase in the labour force and in the numbers of people at work. Central Statistics Office (CSO) material\(^27\) shows that the total number in employment grew from 1.183 million in 1993 to 1.793 million in 2003 - an increase of over 51 per cent. The increased demand for labour has been met through a significant reduction in unemployment levels, through a major increase in female participation and through labour immigration.

5.3.2 Of particular interest to the childcare sector is the increase in the rates of female labour force participation, which leads to an increase in the demand for childcare. Table 5.3 below shows some key statistics in relation to numbers of women actively participating in the labour force from 1997 to 2004. (Note: comparative data only exist from 1997 onwards due to changes in the statistical methodologies for these data series.)
5.3.3 The table shows an increase of 48.5 per cent in the numbers of women in employment over the seven year period - representing an increase in female labour force participation from 42 per cent to 50.8 per cent. (Incidentally, the increase in the numbers of men in employment grew by 30 per cent in the same period.) Of particular note is the increase in the number of women who are in part time employment - this number increased from 124,600 to 251,900 - an increase of over 100 per cent. The ability of this group of women to link their working day to their children's school timetable has a particular impact on the need for School Age Childcare.

5.3.4 CSO research also shows that, in 2004, only 1,900 women in part-time employment considered that they would prefer to work longer hours, while 32,800 women were recorded as unemployed and seeking work.

5.3.5 CSO material gathered through the National Household Survey looks at the age composition of family units. This material provides an insight into the age structures of the family units in the workforce and, as will be seen in Table 5.4 below, can be used to give an indication of the numbers of families which would have a requirement for School Age Childcare.

### TABLE 5.4
**COMPOSITION OF FAMILY UNITS OF COUPLES AND LONE PARENTS WITH CHILDREN ACTIVE IN THE LABOUR FORCE – Q4 2004**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Couples with female partner in employment (000's)</th>
<th>Lone parents - male or female - in employment (000's)</th>
<th>Total (000's)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At least 1 child aged under 3 and no child aged 15 or over</td>
<td>100.2</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>118.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least 1 child aged under 3 and at least 1 child aged 15 or over</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All children aged 5 to 14</td>
<td>47.8</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>61.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No child aged under 3, at least 1 child aged 5 to 14 and at least 1 child aged 15 or over</td>
<td>71.5</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>90.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All children aged 15 and over</td>
<td>86.2</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>117.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>310.1</strong></td>
<td><strong>83.8</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CSO

28 CSO: Statistical Yearbook of Ireland 2002 : Table 2.2 - 1997 and Quarterly National Household Survey – Q4/2004
5.3.6 The analysis of this table makes the assumption that the female partners of men in employment who have children and who are not themselves economically active will normally be in a position to care for their children without recourse to childcare. It is of course recognised that many such parents both also acknowledge and avail of the benefits of childcare.

5.3.7 Table 5.4 suggests that there are some 390,000 family units with dependent children where the mother works in the case of couples and where the adult parent works in the case of lone parent family units. Table 5.5 refines these data further and looks at the childcare needs of these family units. In this analysis, it has assumed that children aged over 15 years do not generally have a childcare requirement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 5.5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHILDCARE REQUIREMENTS OF FAMILY UNITS WITH FEMALE PARTNER ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE AND OF LONE PARENTS ACTIVE IN THE LABOUR FORCE- Q4/2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family units likely to require pre-school childcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family units likely to require school age childcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source : D/JELR derived from previous table

5.3.8 Table 5.5 suggests that, in Ireland, 123,900 family units are likely to require pre-school childcare to meet the needs of parents in employment while 152,500 family units with children of school going age (aged 5 to 14 years) have both partners working or in the case of lone parent families the parent is in employment. Thus it is likely that 152,500 family units are faced with the dilemma of finding appropriate childcare arrangements for their school going children out of school hours, be it throughout the year or during school holidays.

5.3.9 The CSO Quarterly National Household Survey does not look at the numbers of dependent children of the workforce. However, CSO statistics on Education30 show that there were almost 449,000 children in first level education in 2002/3.

5.3.10 The Working Group has linked these CSO Education data with the National Household Survey data and estimates that the 152,500 family units with school going children and two parents in employment in the case of couples and a working parent in the case of lone parents are likely to have about 360,000 school going children under 15 years between them. While many female employees are known to be in part time employment, those with dependent children of primary school going age are almost all likely to have a need for childcare during school holidays.

5.3.11 Unpublished CSO material suggests that more than 35 per cent of working mothers who are in the age grouping most likely to have primary school going children are in part-time rather than full time employment. Of this group of 77,500 women, at least two thirds are likely to have children of primary school age. While many of these women
may not have childcare requirements during term time, many will require care for their children during the holiday period. Data derived from the CSO\[^{31}\] suggest that the typical family unit with primary school children in Ireland here the youngest child is of primary school going age is likely to have almost 2.7 children. Even narrowing this assumption to two children per family unit, it is likely that about 100,000 children attend primary school while their parents (particularly mothers) are in part time employment and therefore these children are likely to require some form of childcare during the holiday periods when their parents are in employment.

5.3.12 Of the 126,000 women in the age group 35 to 44 who are likely to be in full time employment, it is likely that at least two thirds would have children and that many of these children would be of school going age creating a need for childcare outside the school day and during the school holidays. Again using the CSO data referred to in the last paragraph, it seems likely that about 160,000 children attend primary school while their parents (particularly mothers) are in full time employment and therefore these children require some care during the periods of the day when their parents are still in full time employment. Many would probably require full time care during the school holidays.

5.3.13 If it is assumed that mothers and single fathers who might be working part-time can link their working hours to those of their children's education, then it seems reasonable to assume that some 100,000 children of school going age (4/5 years to 12 years) require childcare on a part time basis during the vacation periods while about 160,000 children are likely to require childcare outside school hours during the academic year and full time childcare during the school holidays.

5.3.14 Obviously it is a matter for parents to choose how best to address the childcare needs of their school going children outside of school hours. What is clear is that the current level of provision of formal childcare for this group falls far short of the estimated need and presents parents with a major dilemma and a further issue for which a family friendly response is needed.

5.3.15 It is also worth noting that this guesstimate of need is based on those currently in the labour force. Published research continues to emphasise the view that childcare can act as a disincentive to women to return to the labour force. CSO material\[^{32}\] suggests that there is potential to increase the labour force (male and female) by somewhere between 4.7 and 7.6 per cent. Obviously, this gap cannot be attributed wholly to childcare issues, the supply of which has grown significantly in recent years, but it would appear that it is a feature for some females who consider returning to the labour market.

\[^{31}\] CSO : Statistical Yearbook : 2004 : Table 1.13
CHAPTER 6
THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOL AGE CHILDCARE IN IRELAND
6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 The Working Group on School Age Childcare has already noted that the current provision of School Age Childcare has developed in a very limited, piecemeal manner in Ireland, with the involvement of

- childminders (be they through informal arrangements with family members or friends or formal through paid childminders);
- multi-purpose crèches and similar childcare facilities in both the public and private sectors;
- expansion of facilities being provided by sessional, pre-school services;
- through services specifically aimed at the school age child and developed and provided by community groups and schools sometimes on school premises; and
- even less frequently, through services specifically aimed at the school age child and developed and provided by community groups and schools sometimes on school premises.

6.2 Building the School Age Childcare Sector

6.2.1 The implementation of the recommendations by the P2000 Expert Working Group on Childcare is being achieved by building on the existing range of services through a range of financial grants for the creation and support of new and enhanced childcare facilities through the EOCP 2000-2006. In adopting this approach, the P2000 Expert Working Group sought to build upon existing services rather than espouse one 'best fit' system of childcare delivery.

6.2.2 The Working Group on School Age Childcare is of the view that a similar approach should be taken in respect of the further development of School Age Childcare and recommends that the services to be developed should build upon and complement the existing provision of school age childcare. However, in so recommending, the Working Group is of the view that projects identified to receive financial support should be carefully focussed to meet the needs and interests of the children availing of the services. School age childcare should be delivered through the a range of high quality services, the opening hours of which meet with the needs of the parents in the workplace as well as those who might be in education or in training.

6.2.3 Accordingly, the Working Group recommends that, in evaluating school age childcare projects for grant assistance, the appraisal process should focus, inter alia, on

- The provision of a high quality service in accordance with the guidelines developed by the Working Group;
- The provision of a year round school age childcare service to meet the needs of parents to combine their childcare and employment (or training and education) responsibilities; and
- The economic sustainability of the project.
6.3 **Delivery Mechanisms for School Age Childcare**

6.3.1 The Working Group recommends that the following groups be actively encouraged to develop school age childcare facilities:

- Community based/not for profit groups, including existing groups who have the capacity to expand into this childcare sector on a year round basis;
- Managing authorities of schools who have space in existing premises to adapt to establish ‘stand alone’ childcare facilities which would conform with best practice and would be available on a year round basis;
- Managing authorities of schools who have land available to establish ‘stand alone’ childcare facilities which would conform with best practice and would be available on a year round basis;
- Private childcare providers who are prepared to establish school age childcare facilities which would be open on a year round basis; and
- Work based childcare facilities.

6.3.2 The Working Group is aware that, under existing arrangements, many childminders care for children out of school hours and frequently collect and deliver children and care for them in the childminder's home. The Working Group is also aware that the D/JELR has prepared a developmental initiative targeting childminders. **The Working Group recommends that provision be made within the EOCP Childminding Initiative to encourage childminders to provide quality childcare for school going children.** Supports should be provided to enhance the skills of childminders, thereby increasing the provision of quality childcare for school going children by childminders.

6.3.3 It is already open to employers to avail of a range of tax incentives to establish childcare facilities. Take-up has been disappointing but this should not preclude the employers' representative organisations from continuing to encourage their members to consider the expansion of existing staff facilities to include school age childcare and the creation and/or support of new facilities to meet the needs of parents of school going children. Such an approach has been found to be beneficial to staff morale and ultimately to productivity in a number of countries. Such firms, which satisfy the general EOCP programme criteria, may also avail of the grant supports made available to private childcare providers under the EOCP, subject, of course, to the availability of funding.

6.3.4 The Working Group noted the work being undertaken jointly by IBEC and ICTU in the context of “Sustaining Progress” to33 explore the provision of childcare for low paid employees and placing a particular emphasis on employer involvement in the delivery of childcare.

6.3.5 Each of the potential suppliers of school age childcare offers distinctive advantages which may meet the differing needs of client groups. Accordingly, any initiative to expand the provision of school age childcare should be open in its approach and should make assistance available to encourage the involvement of each category in the delivery of school age childcare in the future.

6.3.6 The thirty three City/County Childcare Committees are now positioned to assist in the stimulation of interest in the development of the school age childcare sector and in the identification of potential locations for services. In addition, the National Voluntary Childcare Organisations have an active interest in the delivery of quality childcare.

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33 Sustaining Progress : Social Partnership Agreement 2003 - 2005
6.4 The provision of School Age Childcare by Community/Not for Profit Groups

6.4.1 Without doubt, the development of childcare facilities by community based/not for profit organisations has been central to the expansion of the supply of childcare places under the 2000 - 2006 EOCP. Services who have received grant support to date may offer one or more of a range of services, from pre-school through to full day care services and, in some instances with an element of School Age service, be it on a year round or ‘academic year’ basis.

6.4.2 Many of these projects are located in housing estates and are therefore often close to the family homes of the clients and are frequently embedded within the local community and the environment in which the child resides. The further development of these services to include an enhanced level of school age childcare offers a number of advantages:

- It offers parents with a number of children at both pre-school and at school the opportunity to have their children cared for together in the one childcare facility;
- In the case of part-time, pre-school services, which frequently operate in the morning, it is a cost effective use of a premises which might otherwise only be used for half of the day and for part of the year.

6.4.3 A significant number of facilities which have received capital grant support under the EOCP 2000 - 2006 currently offer pre-school services on a sessional basis, and sometimes only in the mornings. The Working Group recommends that groups which have received grant support for sessional childcare services under the EOCP be encouraged to further expand the range of services they provide, thereby maximising use of the premises. The provision of a school age service in the afternoons and the provision of a combined service (for both the pre-school and school age groups during the school holiday periods in these premises would increase usage of the premises and provide an additional service without the full capital costs associated with providing a new service. The Working Group recommends that such groups be given priming support to cover the cost of the additional capital items needed to cater for the older age group.

6.5 Linking the provision of School Age Childcare to the School Premises

6.5.1 The linkage between the school premises and the after school service is quite widespread in other European countries. It will be noted that the latest trend in Scandinavia is to link these two services. France has long had a tradition of linking the Garderie Maternelle with the primary school and the development of school age childcare is France is frequently also linked with the formal school building. The Working Group recommends that such groups be given priming support to cover the cost of the additional capital items needed to cater for the older age group.

6.5.2 In an Irish context, ownership of school premises is generally vested in patron bodies or their nominees. The managing authorities for primary schools are frequently locally representative boards of management. It would of course be necessary for these bodies to support the use of the school facilities for the provision of school age childcare, while the support of the Minister for Education and Science would also be crucial.

6.5.3 It is understood that changing demographics have led to a number of schools having classroom space which is no longer required for school purposes. In some school sites, spare land may be available for the construction of a purpose built stand alone School Age facility.

34 European Commission Network on Childcare : School Age Childcare in the European Union 1996
6.5.4 It may be that individual boards of management might be prepared to undertake themselves the development of school age childcare to address the needs of their parent groups. However others might be prepared to enter into agreement with suitable not for profit community groups who would deliver the childcare service on the school premises.

6.5.5 The use of school premises which might have spare capacity or of school grounds which might have adequate site space available to develop a school age childcare facility would lead to an economic use of an existing asset and would be beneficial in that it offers a solution to the issue of transportation of the child from his or her primary school setting to the School Age Childcare facility.

6.5.6 The Working Group only recommends the use of school premises or school lands for the delivery of school age childcare in circumstances where the school managing authorities and/or owners are prepared to make those premises available for a long term lease or other long term commitment to ensure that facilities are available for a reasonable number of years. This is to ensure value for money in terms of any investment to adapt, enhance or otherwise improve existing facilities or to construct new, purpose built facilities on school property.

6.5.7 Care must also be taken to ensure that the school age childcare facility located in a school setting does not come to represent a continuation of the primary school process for the child. It would not be acceptable to the Working Group for schools or other childcare providers to use existing classrooms for school age childcare, even outside of normal school hours or during the vacation period. The Working Group recommends that the School Age Childcare facility located in the school setting must be of a standard equivalent to the high, child-focused, specification being recommended in the present report for stand alone school age facilities or for the school age childcare elements of integrated services.

6.5.8 As new residential areas develop throughout Ireland, new schools are still being constructed to provide educational facilities locally. The Working Group recommends that new school building projects be encouraged to incorporate a quality school age childcare facility. This would facilitate the seamless provision of childcare outside school hours and would alleviate the burden of searching for childcare for parents who may work at some distance from their place of residence.

6.6 Provision of School Age Childcare by Private Childcare Providers

6.6.1 The EOCP 2000 - 2006 makes grant assistance amounting to 65 per cent of project costs up to a limit of €50,790 available to private childcare providers to enable them to create new or enhanced childcare facilities. There is no restriction on the type of service to be offered by the private provider but it must support the parent who is undertaking education or training or is in employment.

6.6.2 Where a private provider owns more than one childcare facility, he/she may avail of grant assistance for each facility, subject to the ceiling of €100,000 per grant recipient which is imposed under the de minimis rule relating to State Aids under EU Competition Law (see below).
To encourage private providers to expand their existing childcare service to include a new school age childcare service, the Working Group recommends that private childcare providers who have already received a grant for one property be permitted to submit an application for further priming support for the same property to cover the cost of the additional capital items needed to provide a school age childcare service, provided that such service is made available five days a week on a year round basis. (Such additional funding would be subject to compliance with the European Union’s State Aids rules which set a maximum amount of grant assistance which may be made available to the private sector.) The *de minimis* State Aids Rule applies to funding and as a result there is a ceiling of €100,000 for total grants and other State supports payable to a single childcare provider. It is envisaged that the maximum rate of assistance for this new project would also be 65 per cent of total project costs up to a total of €50,790 per project.
CHAPTER 7
QUALITY IN SCHOOL AGE CHILDCARE
QUALITY IN SCHOOL AGE CHILDCARE

7.1 Much of the international discussion at the present time in relation to the delivery of childcare services focuses on the topic of quality childcare services. A number of seminal works were published in the mid-1990s and these have contributed to the adoption of quality standards and quality proofing mechanisms in a number of countries.

7.2 The early work tended to focus on early childhood care but there is an emerging body of work in relation to the delivery of a quality school age service. Again some of the earliest work comes from Australia and fromOFSTED which regulates the childcare sector in England.

7.3 Quality Standards for Childcare in Australia

7.3.1 The Working Group found strong parallels between the guidelines and quality thinking in relation to school age childcare as delivered in a number of different countries. Considerable work has been done in the field of School Age Childcare in Australia and New Zealand. The Australian National Out of School Hours Services Association (NOSHA) has developed quality assurance guidelines based on what is regarded as best practice for the sector. The underlying principle sees that

“best practice is child focused and results from interactions between those whose primary concern is the well-being of the whole child.”

35

7.3.2 The Australian model stresses the importance of creating an environment that meets the emotional, physical and developmental needs of all children. Emphasis is placed on the need for an interactive environment as is the need for the service to operate with a solid organisational framework, in co-operation with the broader community.

7.3.3 The Australian Quality Indicators for Out of School Hours Service are addressed under six key elements

- Development
- Emotional Environment
- Physical Environment
- Interactive Environment
- Framework
- Community

7.3.4 The listing below outlines the key indicators identified for use in Australia.

35 NOSHA : web site
AUSTRALIAN QUALITY INDICATORS FOR OUT OF SCHOOL SERVICES

Development
- An Out of School Hours Care Service recognises the unique developmental requirements of each individual child and makes an effort to meet these needs.
- A well planned Out of School Hours Care service programme encourages participation by all children.

Emotional Environment
- An Out of School Hours Care service makes every effort to offer an environment that meets the emotional needs of all children.
- The programme encourages the emotional development of the individual child.

Physical Environment
- The Out of School Hours Care service provides a safe and secure physical environment which shows a visitor that it is a place that specifically caters for 5 to 12 year olds.
- The Out of School Hours Care service provides an environment that is healthy and hygienic.
- The Out of School Hours Care service has procedures and materials for the effective administration of routine and emergency first aid.
- The Out of School Hours Care service provides an adequate, comfortable space indoors and out which caters for the individual needs of every child.

Interactive Environment
- The Out of School Hours Care service fosters clear communication and meaningful interaction at all levels between staff, children, parents, management, sponsors, government and the community.
- The Out of School Hours Care service actively fosters positive self esteem.

Framework
- The Out of School Hours Care service implements a clearly defined and documented operational policy.
- The Out of School Hours Care service is financially accountable and effective.
- The Out of School Hours Care service operates under and efficient and fair management model.
- The Out of School Hours Care service ensures a supportive framework for staffing.
- The Out of School Hours Care service provides a venue that is conducive to best practices.

Community
- The Out of School Hours Care service operates as an integral and valued part of the Community.

7.3.5 The Working Group wholly endorses these key elements as being important principles upon which to focus in the development of school age childcare in Ireland.

7.4 Quality Standards for Childcare in Great Britain

7.4.1 We have already noted the considerable expansion of Out of School Services which has taken place in recent years in Great Britain. The quality issue across the whole childcare sector has been mainstreamed through the national standards set for each of the childcare sectors by OFSTED - the British educational standards authority. In Britain the standards only have statutory authority in respect of childcare provision for children aged under eight years - this is due to the legislative base which is not very different from the Irish legislation, except that the British law covers childcare for children up to the age of eight.
7.4.2 The box below gives detail of the current British National Standards for Childcare. These standards are applied to all forms of childcare provision but OFSTED has published documents of guidance to the achievement of the National Standards for each of the principal childcare services, full day care, sessional day care, out of school childcare, etc.

**OFSTED NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR CHILD CARE**

**Standard 1 Suitable Person**
Adults providing day care, looking after children of having unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so.

**Standard 2 Organisation**
The registered person meets required adult/child ratios, ensures that training and qualifications requirements are met and organises space and resources to meet the children’s needs effectively.

**Standard 3 Care, Learning and Play**
The registered person meets children’s individual needs and promotes their welfare. He/she plans and provides activities and play opportunities to develop children’s emotional, physical, social and intellectual capabilities.

**Standard 4 Physical Environment**
The premises are safe, secure and suitable for their purpose. They provide adequate space in an appropriate location, are welcoming to children and offer access to the necessary facilities for a range of activities, which promote their development.

**Standard 5 Equipment**
Furniture, equipment and toys are provided which are appropriate for their purpose and help to create an accessible and stimulating environment. They are of suitable design and condition, well maintained and conform to safety standards.

**Standard 6 Safety**
The registered person takes positive steps to promote safety within the setting and on outings and ensures proper precautions are taken to prevent accidents.

**Standard 7 Health**
The registered person promotes the good health of children and takes positive steps to prevent the spread of widespread infection and appropriate measures when they see fit.

**Standard 8 Food and Drink**
Children are provided with regular drinks and food in adequate quantities for their needs. Food and drink is properly prepared, nutritious and complies with dietary and religious requirements.

**Standard 9 Equal Opportunities**
The registered person and staff actively promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice for all children.

**Standard 10 Special Needs (including Special Educational Needs and Disabilities)**
The registered person is aware that some children may have special needs and is proactive in ensuring that appropriate action can be taken when such a child is identified or admitted to the provision. Steps are taken to promote the welfare and development of the child within the setting in partnership with the parents and other relevant parties.

**Standard 11 Behaviour**
Adults caring for children in the provision are able to manage a wide range of children’s behaviour in a way which promotes their welfare and development.

**Standard 12 Working in Partnership with Parents and Carers**
The registered person and staff work in partnership with parents to meet the needs of the children, both individually and as a group. Information is shared.
7.4.3 The Working Group on School Age Childcare notes the relevance of each of these British standards to the development of quality childcare in Ireland and their equal relevance for the development of the school age childcare sector. Reference will be made later to some of the guidelines developed by OFSTED in relation to the implementation of the guidelines within the Out of School Hours setting.

7.4.4 The Kid’s Clubs Network have established a Quality Assurance Scheme to help school age childcare services to achieve the best standards of provision for children, young people, parents and the wider community. Accreditation can be awarded at three different levels of quality following an evidence gathering and inspection process. In relation to quality for the after school sector, the Kid’s Clubs Network notes that

“Quality can be identified in a number of factors:

- The environment of a scheme - in its premises and the way it uses them, in the materials, displays, books and equipment to be found; and in the general atmosphere of the scheme;
- The behaviour of the staff towards each other and towards the children and parents - in what the children, staff and volunteers actually do; in the way they support and supervise play; in how they care for the children; in how they welcome and involve parents;
- The communication between managers, staff, volunteers, children and parents - in the verbal contact that goes on in the scheme; in the handouts, letters and notices by which children and parents get information; in the consultation with parents and children;
- Its capability for maintaining and improving quality - through its staffing and procedures; training; management arrangements; routines; meetings; financial systems;
- Clear values which lead to quality. These will show in the scheme’s policies on equal opportunities, health, diet, behaviour; beliefs in the value of play and the development of children; importance attached to the views of parents and children; and in the commitment to quality itself.”

7.5 European Commission Network Recommendations

7.5.1 The work on School Age Childcare developed by the European Commission Network on Childcare (ECNC) also stresses the importance of developing and setting standards for the sector, noting that

“School age childcare services are by definition about the care of children when their parents are absent. Caring means taking responsibility for children’s physical, emotional and developmental well being. In many services this is for considerable lengths of time, perhaps for as long as ten hours per day during the long Summer holidays. School age childcare services play an important role in the lives of the children who use them. It is essential that they meet children’s needs during the time they are used. This entails providing a setting where children feel they belong and where staff relate to them on an individual level as well as collectively.”

7.5.2 The following table contains the ECNC recommendations in relation to the provision of school age childcare by EU Member States. The content here is broader than the previous two examples, focusing in this instance not only on quality but also making reference to a number of policy issues, the scope of which are broader than the childcare sector, although all have an impact on the delivery of school age childcare.

38 Kids’ Clubs Network : Aiming High Quality Assurance Programme : Page 5
39 ENSAC : Ibid. : page 74
1. We recommend that policy makers at local and national level take appropriate steps to provide services, or to enable the provision of services for children's care and recreation outside regular school time.

2. We recommend that developing and setting standards, evaluating services against them and seeing that they are met should be a public responsibility.

3. We recommend that ways are found to subsidise school-age childcare services so that they may be accessible to all who need them and so that adequate services may be maintained.

4. We recommend that providers and staff put a high priority on facilitating children's own choices and on play.

5. Giving children access to the arts, crafts, nature and sport are legitimate and important aims for school aged childcare services.

6. No child should be denied access to services, nor be discriminated against within them, on the grounds of disability, social class, ethnic background colour or gender.

7. We recommend that staff should keep individual parents informed about their children and about what happens in a school age childcare service. Appropriate opportunities should be made to welcome parents and collaborate with them.

8. The necessity of training and qualification for staff is commensurate with the importance of their work. We recommend that training for childcare and play is developed at vocational and professional level within the Member States of the European Union.

9. All non-trained staff and volunteers should have the support of and supervision from staff who have been trained properly in childcare or play.

10. We recommend that school-age childcare and play staff should receive the recognition they deserve and that this is reflected in their pay and other conditions of employment.

11. We recommend that providers take steps to recruit more men for school age childcare and play services.

12. We recommend that the needs of younger children are given special consideration in the provision and staffing of services, and that these should provide childcare and not mere supervision. A necessary condition is that there is enough trained staff, alert to the needs of children as individuals, whatever their ages.

13. Adolescents and their parents have their own need for school age care and recreational services. We recommend that age appropriate services be developed.

14. In planning childcare and recreational services, the needs of children with disability need special attention.

15. The school transport system should cover the needs of rural children for accessing childcare and recreational services.

16. We recommend that Member States develop flexible leave arrangements appropriate to the needs of school age children and their parents.

17. We recommend that, in the absence of dedicated childcare services, policy makers at local and national level take appropriate steps to extend the service of the school to cover lunchtime, and to provide a timetable which is regular for individual children.

18. We recommend that planning and traffic policy have explicit reference to children and their needs.

19. That a centre is set up with assistance from the European Commission, with the objective of supporting the development of school age childcare services within the Member States through research, documentation and promoting exchange and collaboration between Member States.
7.6 Quality in an Irish Context

7.6.1 In approaching its work, the Working Group is mindful of the considerable work on the definition of quality childcare which was done relatively recently by the Partnership 2000 Expert Working Group on Childcare. The P2000 Expert Working Group\(^\text{40}\) noted that

- Achieving high quality childcare is an integral part of the structure and implementation of the National Childcare Strategy; and
- A high quality childcare service must be regarded as one which provides enhancing experiences for children and positive interactions between adults and children.

7.6.2 The Working Group believes that each of these characteristics is equally relevant to its work on developing guidelines for quality school age childcare. Accordingly the guidelines being recommended by the Working Group will be based upon these quality criteria.

7.6.3 However, some years have elapsed since the P2000 Expert Working Group Report was published and our knowledge base in relation to best practice on childcare continues to expand, possibly through the wider availability of information and the ease with which overseas thinking can now be accessed through Internet based research. Accordingly, in adapting the thinking of the P2000 Expert Working Group on quality childcare to the provision of high quality school aged childcare to meet the needs of the children of Ireland, the Working Group is of the view that much of what has been laid down in other jurisdictions has validity in considering the development of school age childcare in Ireland.

7.6.4 The P2000 Expert Working Group enshrined the relevant Articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child\(^\text{41}\) into its work and recommendations and the Working Group on School Age Childcare fully endorses this. The Working Group believes that Article 31 of the Convention\(^\text{42}\) is particularly relevant to its work. This Article affirms that

“State Parties recognise the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.”

7.6.5 The P2000 Expert Working Group identified fourteen characteristics for quality childcare, noting that

“A quality childcare service was seen by the Partnership 2000 Expert Working Group as a service which:

- Offers both care and play based educational opportunities appropriate to the individual children’s age and stage of development;
- Provides a high quality environment with equipment, materials, activities and interactions appropriate to the age and stage of development of each child being catered for;
- Has a high adult/child ratio;
- Has carers/personnel who are trained and registered with the lead agency;
- Offers children continuity of relationships with adults and other children;
- Works in partnership with parents of children attending;
- Listens to children and gives due consideration to their wishes;
7.6.6 The Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme 2000 - 2006 is making grant assistance available to existing childcare providers for the enhancement of their physical childcare facilities to enable them to offer a high quality physical environment to their client group. Similarly new facilities are being encouraged to develop to meet best practice in terms of both design and facility ethos. Supports to and through the City/County Childcare Committees and the National Voluntary Childcare Organisations are enabling those organisations to promote the highest quality standards among childcare practitioners.

7.6.7 As school age childcare is a relatively undeveloped childcare sector in an Irish context, there is limited experience in its delivery. Accordingly the school age childcare sector needs to be developed to ensure that the facilities and programmes being offered lead to an enjoyable, creative, stimulating, developmental and holistic experience for the client child who may spend long and regular periods in the school age childcare facility as an alternative to his/her own home atmosphere. Similarly the very nature of school age childcare as a possible complement to primary school requires a special set of qualities and a focus which differentiate it from the formal educational process.

7.6.8 The Working Group on School Age Childcare is aware that it is undertaking its work when the provision of centre-based school age childcare in Ireland is in its infancy. Accordingly the Working Group believes that Ireland is in a position to espouse the highest international standards for the sector from the beginning. Accordingly the guidelines which are being recommended for school age childcare by the Working Group are drawn from the quality standards which have been adopted in other countries where the sector is already well developed.

7.6.9 The Working Group is already recommending that grant support be made available by central Government to develop school age childcare in a range of appropriate settings. However, in so recommending, the Working Group further recommends that grant support should only be made available to childcare providers who are prepared to deliver a comprehensive school age childcare programme which addresses the social, physical, developmental, recreational and creative needs of the child in a happy and caring environment.

7.7 The chapters which follow explore in greater depth some of the key elements which contribute to the delivery of a quality school age childcare service. These include the activity programme and the importance of play; the physical environment; the regulation of school age childcare; training for the sector; and relationships between providers of school age childcare, the client children, their parents and on occasion the schools.
CHAPTER 8
THE CHILD IN THE CONTEXT OF SCHOOL AGE CHILDCARE
THE CHILD IN THE CONTEXT OF SCHOOL AGE CHILDCARE

8.1 The focus within this report thus far has been on the provision of quality school age childcare services within the Irish context and has been informed by international research and experiences. Acknowledging the centrality of the child within the school age childcare service, the Working Group feels it important to present a synopsis of current thinking on the developing child.

8.2.1 In reviewing the extensive literature on child development, there are a number of perspectives that enhance our understanding of the child as an individual.

8.2.2 Emerging from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child\(^43\) and subsequently the National Children's Strategy\(^44\) is an affirmation that children are citizens with rights and responsibilities. From this perspective, children are respected as people with competencies, skills, knowledge and life experiences. Table 8.1 summarises some key elements of the UN Convention and its relevance to childcare provision.

### TABLE 8.1
UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD AND SCHOOL AGE CHILDCARE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARTICLE</th>
<th>RELEVANCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Article 2- Non discrimination</td>
<td>Services must be proactive in challenging attitudes, language and behaviours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article 3- Best Interests of the child</td>
<td>Services should work with the best interests of the child to the fore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article 12- The child’s opinion</td>
<td>The child has a valuable contribution to make and should be heard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article 23- Children with Disability</td>
<td>Services should be inclusive, providing access to all children and supporting to reach their potential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article 31- Leisure, Recreation And Cultural Activities</td>
<td>School Age Programme should provide for rest and leisure in ways that are socially and culturally appropriate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.2.3 Current thinking from Howard Gardner\(^45\) identifies children as competent people bringing different skills, talents and intelligences to their environment, in this instance to the school age childcare service. He defines intelligences as the ability to solve problems, or create products that are valued within one or more cultural settings. If, within the childcare service, the child is recognised as bringing particular talents and intelligences, then programme planning and implementation becomes inclusive. Children are viewed as having an expertise which can be shared within the group. They become both teachers and learners.

\(^{43}\) Ibid
\(^{44}\) National Children’s Office : National Children’s Strategy
\(^{45}\) Gardner : Frames of Mind : 1993
8.3 Previously the view of the child tended to focus on development - how the child developed and how adults could support that development. In the late 1990s, Bredekamp and Copple\textsuperscript{46} proposed “Developmentally Appropriate Practice” as a framework for working with young children, drawing from the work of Piaget who had proposed a stage and age approach to development and learning.

8.4 Recent literature refers frequently to the SPICE model linking play activities and outcome and aspects of the child's Social, Physical, Intellectual, Creative and Emotional development. The table below identifies some of the developmental needs of the child.

### TABLE 8.2

#### THE “SPICE” MODEL OF DEVELOPMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOCIAL</th>
<th>PHYSICAL</th>
<th>INTELLECTUAL</th>
<th>CREATIVE</th>
<th>EMOTIONAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Co-operating with</td>
<td>Fine motor and manipulative</td>
<td>Intellectual concepts such as time, space and</td>
<td>Self expression</td>
<td>Responding to others' feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>others</td>
<td>movements</td>
<td>weight</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking turns</td>
<td>Balance</td>
<td></td>
<td>Adapting and using new skills</td>
<td>Confidence to try new things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing</td>
<td>Gross motor and manipulative</td>
<td>Problem solving</td>
<td>Using imagination</td>
<td>Developing a high self esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respecting others</td>
<td>Locomotive skills</td>
<td></td>
<td>Decision making</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening to</td>
<td>Hand-eye co-ordination</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>others</td>
<td></td>
<td>Using language to convey thought and feelings,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Using and understanding symbols</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking for help</td>
<td>General co-ordination</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiation Skills</td>
<td>General Fitness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: derived from a number of documents

8.5 It is recommended by developmental practitioners that play activities being developed within the childcare setting be formulated to ensure that each of these developmental needs is fostered in a holistic manner. Some types of play address specific individual areas of development, but many will focus on a number of developmental needs together.

8.6 The US National Network for Child Care differentiates between the developmental needs of the different age groups of school children who are likely to attend school age childcare facilities. The Working Group considers that these offer a good guide for Irish childcare workers operating in school age childcare settings.

**TABLE 8.3**

**NATIONAL NETWORK FOR CHILDCARE : DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS AND ACTIVITIES**<sup>47</sup>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YOUNG SCHOOL AGE</th>
<th>MIDDLE SCHOOL AGE</th>
<th>OLDER SCHOOL AGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experimentation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Skill development</strong></td>
<td><strong>Co-ordinating</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>is the key to</strong></td>
<td><strong>is most important.</strong></td>
<td><strong>and combining</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>successful activities.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Learning how to use 'real' tools,</strong></td>
<td><strong>well-</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let them use</td>
<td><strong>equipment and materials is of great</strong></td>
<td><strong>learned skills and abilities into</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>their bodies,</td>
<td><strong>importance. They want time to</strong></td>
<td><strong>new routines and rules regulated</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ideas and materials</td>
<td><strong>practise new skills but don't want to</strong></td>
<td><strong>activities is of interest to this</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in new and</td>
<td><strong>get bogged down in rules.</strong></td>
<td><strong>group. This age child places</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>different ways.</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>great emphasis</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is no</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>on precision and perfecting.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>right or wrong</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>way.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| | **Experience and not a finished** | **Completed project, finished** |
| | **product is what is important to this** | **products, works of art are core** |
| | **age group.** | **issues. They enjoy seeing other** |
| | | **'artists' or 'scientists' working and** |
| | | **sharing 'tips of the trade'.** |

| | **Incorporate fantasy, pretend and** | **The imagination is channelled into** |
| | **dramatic play in as many aspects of** | **adult expressions such as making** |
| | **an activity as possible.** | **documentaries, poetry or short story** |
| | | **writing. These children are ready to** |
| | | **take a script and make it come alive** |
| | | **via acting, directing and scenery** |
| | | **construction.** |

| | **Emphasise the use of the senses.** | **Emotional responses to sensory** |
| | **Activities that require them to use** | **stimulation are very typical. They** |
| | **their ears, eyes, nose, mouth and** | **respond to the beauty of images.** |
| | **skin are right on target! Think about** | **Words, movements, etc. It is not** |
| | **combining two or more senses.** | **unusual for them to "cry for no** |
| | | **reason". Also to be ready for** |
| | | **experimental behaviour to enhance** |
| | | **sensory stimulation i.e. Drug and** |
| | | **alcohol abuse.** |

| | **Activities that re-enact the routines** | **Global awareness and interest in** |
| | **and events of their known world** | **people from around the world are of** |
| | **(home and school) will be sought** | **great interest.** |
| | **and enjoyed.** | |

| | **Fostering friendship, skills of sharing,** | **Having a best friend of being part of** |
| | **helping, taking turns and working** | **a group are key concerns. They** |
| | **with another person are very** | **welcome opportunities that help** |
| | **appropriate.** | **them meet members of the opposite** |
| | | **sex. They enjoy administering** |
| | | **surveys and collecting data that puts** |
| | | **them in touch with the ideas and** |
| | | **attitudes of their contemporaries.** |

| | **Finding appropriate ways of** | **Finding different ways of expressing** |
| | **channelling emotions and their** | **feelings and ideas is of great interest.** |
| | **behavioural expression are necessary** | **Exposure to poetry, dance, art and** |
| | **and important. Help children to use** | **communications training as alternate** |
| | **words rather than actions to express** | **means of expression is a good idea.** |
| | **their feelings.** | |

| | **Children learn who they are via what** | **Interest in the physical self tends to** |
| | **they can do! Help them see how far** | **be the primary focus of this age** |
| | **they have come since they were pre-** | **group. It is, however, important that** |
| | **schoolers and show them what they** | **they see themselves as being social,** |
| | **have to look forward to as they** | **emotional and intellectual beings.** |
| | **continue to grow and learn.** | **Meeting men and women from a** |
| | | **wide variety of careers and** |
| | | **backgrounds is a great way of seeing** |
| | | **the possibilities that reside within** |
| | | **themselves.** |

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8.7 The concepts explored by the US National Network for Child Care are developed more broadly in the work on ‘After School : The Way Forward’ published by the (Irish) National Children’s Nurseries Association (NCNA). The NCNA document recommends that designers of school age childcare programmes must have a clear understanding of the general developmental aspects of the child between the ages of five to twelve years in order to understand play provision for this group.

8.8 Table 8.4 below is based on the thinking of the NCNA. It enunciates some general comments about child development for the age group and then identifies key developmental benchmarks under the headings of physical, cognitive and social/emotional development.

**TABLE 8.4a**

DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES IN THE CHILD AGED FIVE TO EIGHT YEARS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENERAL FEATURES OF DEVELOPMENT</th>
<th>PHYSICAL</th>
<th>COGNITIVE</th>
<th>SOCIAL/ EMOTIONAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The years from five to eight form a bridge between the early period of rapid development and the later period of slower growth before puberty. They are an exciting period of widening boundaries and of mastering new material. The child is gradually taking on responsibility for his or her own life and depending less on adult support.</td>
<td>● Gains independence and likes to do things for themselves; ● Can look after their own personal care and mind their own belongings; ● Is better at physical skills like cycling a bicycle, team sports or swimming; ● Can hold and use tools - even small things like sewing and knitting needles.</td>
<td>● Is much better at hand eye co-ordinating and can play games that have difficult movements; ● Can recognise shapes and symbols; ● Learns to read and write; ● Can understand concepts related to logic; ● Is capable of rational thought; ● Can use their reasoning to problem solve and work things out for themselves.</td>
<td>● Has become less dependent on their parents, and friends are becoming more important; ● Can understand rules and play or participate in a greater variety of games; ● Is now more aware of how others view them and can feel shame or embarrassment when shown up in front of friends; ● Needs to practice new skills without fear or ridicule; ● Self-esteem and confidence is developing and is learning to become more socially and emotionally independent; ● Will notice that boys and girls tend to stick to friendships of their own gender because play becomes increasingly differentiated.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE 8.4b
DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES IN THE CHILD AGED EIGHT TO TWELVE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENERAL FEATURES OF DEVELOPMENT</th>
<th>PHYSICAL</th>
<th>COGNITIVE</th>
<th>SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The years from eight to twelve span the development of childhood stability to the onset of puberty. Children are increasingly independent of adults and membership of their own group is now important.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is growing steadily and developing strength and co-ordination;</td>
<td>Is noted as being the period of stability;</td>
<td>Friends continue to be important to them;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is now able to cook and use sharp tools independent of an adult;</td>
<td>Has settled into school;</td>
<td>Prefers to play out of doors with their friends. They need time and space for imaginative play without adult help;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs time to adjust and to accept the changes that are happening.</td>
<td>Needs to continue to build on what they already know and can do;</td>
<td>Likes to collect and swap a lot of things;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is full of questions about the world;</td>
<td>Can understand complex rules. They also realise that they can make their own rules, that rules can be changed: consequences of breaking the rules;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Is developing talents that might lead them to their future vocation in life;</td>
<td>By the time they are twelve, their friends will have greater influence than parents, teachers or religious leaders on their moral development;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Still needs to reason things out using trial and error and needing to have hands-on practical experience to do this.</td>
<td>Is beginning to understand how their actions can affect others or make them feel;</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Is capable of sorting out sophisticated concepts of fairness, equality and right and wrong and is a good problem solver;</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Is able to empathise with others and can be expected to understand another’s point of view;</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>By the time they are teenagers, will have developed increased physical and financial independence, which will allow more opportunities for potentially negative peer pressure to be exerted on them.</td>
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</table>
8.9 In making recommendations about the establishment of a quality school age childcare service in Ireland, the Working Group is of the view that such services must be underpinned by sound principles which support inclusion and participation. The following concepts are particularly important:

- Children and adults have rights and responsibilities within the service.
- The work and ethos of the service should be underpinned by the United Nations Charter on the Rights of the Child and on the National Children's Strategy.
- Access and participation in the life of the service is open to all stakeholders.
- Children learn and develop in the context of a caring community which values their individual and combined strengths.
- Links with and between the child, family, service and wider community promote a sense of identity and belonging.
- Mutually respectful relationships are fostered and recognised as being central to the life of the service.
- Children, staff and parents engage in meaningful dialogue.
- The voice of the child is heard, respected and contributes to the service.
- Interactions are sensitive and responsive.
- The ethos and practice of the service values diversity and promotes equality.
- The programme is culturally and socially appropriate to the children, families and staff participating in the service.
- Staff and children work together in ways that are respectful and inclusive.
- Children are protected from bullying and abuse.
- The environment provides opportunities for learning.
- The service should provide opportunities for positive experiences which support learning, development and well being for all.
- The programme should promote healthy life choices
- The programme should offer opportunities for challenge and risk.
- The programme should be recreational and educationally of benefit to children.
- The programme should have breadth, depth and balance.
- Staff should be valued for the knowledge, expertise and life experience they bring to the service.
- The professionalisation of staff should be supported within the service
- Programmes, policies and procedures should be responsive to the needs of children, families and staff.
CHAPTER 9
Quality School Age Childcare (1)
The Activity Programme And The Importance Of Play
9.1 **Introduction**

9.1.1 School age childcare is a unique branch of the childcare sector as it complements the primary school which the child is experiencing in parallel. This presents particular challenges for the school age childcare practitioner who seeks to avoid replicating activities which the child might be undertaking in the formal educational setting. However the school age childcare practitioner can work on that complementarity through an awareness of the primary school curriculum for the age groups who are availing of the school age childcare service.

9.1.2 Given that the child may spend most of his/her daily quality recreational time in a school age childcare facility, it is important that the quality of the interactions with peers and staff, the programme on offer and the physical environment affords opportunities for work, rest and play.

9.1.3 The age span of the client group and their wide developmental range are perhaps the greatest challenge in the school age childcare setting. The range of activities to be developed has to meet the needs of a group who may well span the age range from four to twelve years. On the one hand this offers the opportunity for socialisation between age groups, on the other it provides challenges in ensuring the safety of all. These issues must be addressed in the context of the programme of activities being offered in the school age childcare facility.

9.2 **The School Age Childcare Programme Focus - International Perspectives**

9.2.1 The Australian National Out of School Hours Services Association (NOSHA) comments that

> “Programmed activities [should be] child centred and the programme [should be] regularly evaluated with regard to positive outcomes for children. Activities [should be] appropriate for the ages and stages of development of the children. Activities offered [should] provide children with opportunities to develop in all areas - physical, creative, intellectual, social and emotional.”

9.2.2 The USA National Network for Child Care (NNCC) recommends very different approaches for the different periods within which school age childcare can operate. In relation to the breakfast (pre school day period), it notes that

> “The before school programme needs to provide a transition from home to the school day.... To exert a calming influence, the before-schol programme should keep the lights low, have quiet music playing in the background and have available games and activities that require little thought or action on the part of the child.”

9.2.3 This contrasts with the recommendations for the after school period in respect of which the NNCC notes that
“Shot from a cannon, funnelled through the narrow door only to explode in your presence, school age children will arrive in the programme each day. The afternoon programme should be the exact opposite of the morning one, as staff work to help children release energy in safe and creative ways. ...There must be strenuous, large muscle activities that allow for noise making and laughter and whole body action - whatever you can think of that requires the body to channel its energy in bursts in a safe way.

“Occasionally some children may arrive looking and feeling totally drained by the stresses of the school day. These children need to be re-energised - a quick snack and some time to talk with staff and friends will help them get ready for the rest of the afternoon.

“The after school programme should provide a wide variety of activities designed to meet the needs of children, enrich their experience and assist them in achieving academic success. The question of whether or not a programme should offer tutoring and require children to complete homework is often debated...

“The afternoon schedule should take the children from where they are when they arrive by providing for the use of large and small muscles, by allowing time to socialise and by letting them create, explore and, most importantly, play.

“Towards the end of the afternoon, it is helpful to engage the children in small group activity... This will help the children towards the next transition: going home.... Such activities should allow children to leave quietly when parents arrive without spoiling the activity. From the parent’s perspective, there is nothing worse than having to wait for the end of an activity, video showing, etc.”

9.2.4 In relation to the holiday period, the NNCC notes that

“Vacations provide a wonderful opportunity to explore the world beyond the centre and to introduce children to historical and cultural sites in the area. It is also time for longer-term complex projects. Full day programmes should be exciting and fun....

“Planning a daily schedule is important not only for [the childcare workers’] sanity but also to allow the children to know and understand a routine. It provides security and allows the children to know what choices are available and when...”

9.2.5 The Working Group is of the view that every childcare practitioner with experience in the delivery of school age childcare will empathise with these views and see the merit in these recommendations.

9.2.6 In Britain, the Kids’ Club Network notes that

“A quality scheme provides a planned range of safe and creative, positive opportunities which provide ownership by children and young people for many elements of the Programme.”

The recommendations parallel those made by the Australian and American organisations and suggest that the programme be based on themes and projects; be flexible with a range of options and differences each day; include children’s own time out and be prepared in consultation with the children who should actively participate in the programme design and development.

51 NNCC : ibid. Page 9
52 NNCC : Ibid. Page 10
53 NNCC : Ibid. Page 10
9.3 The importance of play for the child

9.3.1 Play is recognised as a basic human right for all children. The importance of play has been reaffirmed by the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Ireland ratified in 1992. Article 31, sets out the child's right to play:

“Parties recognise the rights of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts: parties shall respect and promote the rights of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.”

9.3.2 Article 7 of the same Convention states

“The child shall have full opportunity to play and recreation, which should be directed to the same purposes as education; society and the public authorities shall endeavour to promote the enjoyment of this right.”

9.3.3 These views are enshrined in the National Children's Strategy which states that

“All children will have access to play, sport and recreation and cultural activities to enrich their experience of childhood.”

9.3.4 On the same topic of play, but specifically referring to childcare, the P2000 Expert Working Group on Childcare noted that:

“Play is one of the essential experiences of childhood. It is central to all aspects of young children's development and learning. All childcare services, therefore, should provide children with opportunities, materials, time and space (both indoor and outdoor) to play.”

9.4 What is Play?

9.4.1 The Children's Play Council in the United Kingdom defines “Play” as

“an essential part of every child's life and vital to their development. It is the way children explore the world around them and develop and practice skills. It is essential for physical, emotional and spiritual growth, for intellectual and educational development, and for acquiring social and behavioural skills.

“Play is a generic term applied to a wide range of activities and behaviours that are satisfying to the child, creative for the child and freely chosen by the child. Children's play may or may not involve equipment or have an end product. Children play on their own and with others. Their play may be boisterous and energetic or quiet and contemplative, light-hearted or very serious.”

9.4.2 Through play, children learn about themselves, other people, their environment and the world around them. Play enables children to explore and practice the roles and experiences that they will meet and fulfil in later life.
9.4.3 Play can be either structured or free and there is a place for each in the activity programme for a school age childcare facility. Structured play is play that has been prearranged in some way - it may be planned and may be facilitated by the adult in conjunction with the participant. Structured play may involve the use of formal toys and games and may be enjoyed by the child alone or as a participant in a group activity.

9.4.4 Free play is spontaneous play which happens when children choose and use the materials and resources in their own way. Free play enables the child to lead the play experience and to control the manner in which it develops, without the involvement of an adult. On the topic of free play, the European Network on School Age Childcare (ENSAC) noted that

“For some children, free play is playing with one friend in a quiet corner; for another child it might mean experimenting with paint, on her own or with a group; still others want to join in elaborate make-believe; running about, hiding, or building dens; or they might just want to sit and chat with a member of staff. These opportunities are often not possible either at home or during the school day. We believe that in their free time children should be able to develop and exercise appropriate autonomy”

9.4.5 Given today's changing lifestyles, children have fewer opportunities to play freely with other children in their locality and on the streets than did children in the past. This in no way takes from the range of opportunities which still present themselves for children in the 21st century and a well planned School Age Childcare service will ensure that the facility is equipped in a manner which affords the child opportunities for exploration under the discrete supervision of the childcare practitioner.

9.4.6 The National Children's Office has published a useful policy document on the development of play and this is a useful tool to inform public policy on the broad issue of children's needs in this field. The objectives of the play policy are as follows and these are linked in the policy document to a range of key recommendations for action:

- “to give children a voice in the design and implementation of play policies and facilities;
- to raise awareness of the importance of play;
- to ensure that children's play needs are met through the development of a child friendly environment;
- to maximise the range of play opportunities available to all children, particularly children who are marginalised, disadvantaged or who have a disability;
- to improve the quality and safety of playgrounds and play areas;
- to ensure that the relevant training and qualifications are available to persons offering play and related services to children;
- to develop a partnership approach in funding and developing play opportunities; and
- to improve information on, and evaluation and monitoring of, play provision for children in Ireland.”

As with all work published by the National Children's Office, the key emphasis is on the “whole child perspective” which sees the active, developing child as the central focus and to children's rights to engage in play and recreational activity, views with which the Working Group concurs in the context of its own work.
9.4.7 Facilitating children's play and recreation within school-age childcare services is an essential element for the delivery of a quality school age childcare service, as indeed is it equally important for all childcare services. A knowledge of play and its concepts leads to a better understanding of what one needs to provide in a quality school-age childcare setting. Given its importance in the life of the school age child and the importance of making adequate provision for appropriate play in developing a school age childcare service, the Working Group considered it important to explore the concept of play in depth.

9.5 The Role of Play in School Age Childcare

9.5.1 A review of a number of recent publications suggests that the benefits of play to the child are numerous. The following are a few of the common themes running through the literature:

- Play promotes children's development, learning creativity, independence and well being;
- Play can keeps children healthy and active - active children become active adults;
- Play fosters social inclusion. It helps children understand the people and places in their lives, learn about their environment and develop their sense of community;
- Play allows children to find out about themselves, their abilities and their interests;
- Play is therapeutic. It helps children to deal with difficult or painful circumstances, such as emotional stress or medical treatment;
- Play gives children the chance to let off steam and have fun.

9.5.2 The Working Group fully endorses the view that play is central to the healthy growth and development of children. As a result, the Working Group concludes that a strong focus on play must be a core principle and indeed a distinguishing characteristic of school age childcare.

9.5.3 Linking this recommendation to the earlier discussion on the developmental needs of the child, the Working Group recommends that the school age childcare service should plan and provide a range of play opportunities and activities to foster the development of children's social, physical, intellectual, creative and emotional capabilities. It may also encompass opportunities to use play to explore Irish language and culture.

9.6 Developing the School Age Childcare Programme - Collaborating with the Child

9.6.1 The Working Group has already noted the important step forward in relation to thinking on children's rights which was enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 12 of the Convention notes that

“State Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.”

9.6.2 Children of school going age can actively contribute to the planning of the programmes of activities for the services in which they spend significant parts of their lives. Again, the Kids’ Clubs Network is clear in its recommendation that

“Participation is closely linked to freedom of expression. It essentially means involvement - having a voice or a part to play in something which affects you. For children attending out of school clubs, - whether before, or after school, or during the holidays - the opportunity to have a say in how the club operates can be a key to the success of the scheme. Children and young people, if involved in the decision making processes are likely to have greater feelings of ‘ownership’ and therefore gain the most benefit from their out of school club.”

9.6.3 The Kids’ Club Guide recommends that children be involved in the running of the school age childcare facility by:

- Offering them choices in what they do and where;
- Asking them their opinions about their likes and dislikes;
- Listening to their ideas on rules and activities;
- Agreeing appropriate policies with them;
- Involving them in planning outings, celebrations and other activities;
- Creating a full induction programme for new children.

9.6.4 The involvement of the child in the planning of the service will necessitate the establishment of a fixed time when children and staff can get together and exchange feedback on previous activities; discuss the activities that they would like to plan; and other issues of importance to them. It is necessary that there be openness in the interchanges and that clear explanations be given where it is not possible to accede to requests from the children.

9.6.5 The Working Group recommends that each school age childcare facility should set aside a period of time each week to enable children and practitioners to work together to review previous activities and to develop the programme of activities for the coming week. This approach has a number of advantages:

- It enables children to identify their preferences;
- It engages them in the democratic process;
- It facilitates dialogue between children and practitioners in a practical manner; and
- It enables both children and practitioners to see the viewpoint of both their peers and their carers/charges.

9.6.6 The Working Group recommends that, when planning play for children, the childcare facility should offer opportunities for a mix of free play and structured play. This approach will ensure that the needs of all the children are catered for, some of whom will need more guidance and support than others and some of whom will have a preference for quieter activities than others.

9.6.7 In so recommending, the Working Group is further endorsing the view of the P2000 Expert Working Group in relation to the benefits of spontaneous play:

“Children’s spontaneous play provides opportunities for exploration, experimentation and manipulation, all of which are essential for the construction of knowledge. During
play a child learns to deal with feelings, to interact with others, to resolve conflicts and to gain a sense of competence. It is through play that children develop their imagination and creativity.”

9.7 Other Aspects of the School Age Childcare Programme - Homework

9.7.1 Brief mention was made previously about linkages between education and school age childcare and of the development of the “homework club”. Homework clubs were generally established in areas of disadvantage to nurture the educational attainment of children. It has also been noted that this activity is outside the scope of the present Report.

9.7.2 That said, school aged childcare services often provide facilities, help and supervision for children to complete homework as part of the range of services. Whereas the Working Group acknowledges that homework support may be an element of a range of activities within the school aged childcare service, it recommends that homework support should not be the core activity of a school aged childcare service.

9.7.3 In this regard, the ENSAC recommendations state that:

“We see [homework support] as one legitimate activity among others, complementing the school and relieving parents and children of an onerous task, at the end of a working day. But mostly school-age childcare services provide for children’s free time – or obligations to one side; they do not have to study, do household chores or sit still in class.

“We believe that this is when children can be themselves, and make their own choice as to activities, play and companions.”

9.7.4 The issue of homework is one on which parents are likely to have views and these should be canvassed by the school age childcare provider. It may be that some parents have a preference towards the completion of homework in the school age childcare facility while others may prefer to have homework completed at home. This may present a challenge to the childcare practitioner some of whose clients may require a quiet period to complete homework while other members of the peer group undertake alternative activities. Similarly the older children will require a significantly longer period to undertake their homework than that needed by the younger client group.

9.7.5 The Working Group recommends that dialogue with the parents and children is critical on the issue of homework. So too is careful planning to ensure that those children, whose parents prefer that they complete their school homework at the school age childcare facility, do not feel that they are missing out on prime activities. The negative impact that this could have on the quality of the homework scarcely needs to be mentioned.

9.8 Other Aspects of the School Age Childcare Programme - Risk

9.8.1 The issue of risk is of increasing importance and concern throughout all aspects of life today. It is of particular concern to those entrusted with the care of children. However, as noted in “Best Play” as recently as 2000

“Risk taking is a natural and desirable aspect of children’s play that they will seek out for themselves.”

65 Expert Working Group: ibid
66 ENSAC: ibid.
9.8.2 Children, especially older children, will naturally seek out opportunities for risk-taking while at play. Play is therefore to be seen as an essential method of teaching a child how to assess and take calculated risks. Risk-taking can be essential to the development of a child’s confidence and abilities both in childhood and later life.

9.8.3 A quality school aged childcare facility should therefore respond by creating an exciting and stimulating environment that balances risks in an appropriate manner. Staff must however of course understand the distinction between acceptable and unacceptable risks and must ensure that the children in the school aged setting are not exposed to unacceptable risks. Staff need to be aware that learning new skills involves an element of risk and must be capable of exercising their judgement about the level of risk that is acceptable and appropriate and also to exercise their judgement as to when it is necessary to intervene to prevent potentially harmful situations.

9.8.4 By having an element of risk in play, children will learn that things do not always work out right - sometimes things can go wrong but with the right support, they can perhaps be put right again or at least learn to live with the mistake. An example of play which has an element of risk-taking would be woodwork, the use of needles for sewing/clothes design projects or the use of electrical equipment for cooking.

9.8.5 The Working Group recommends that risk-taking in the school age childcare setting should be accommodated under circumstances which could include:

- good practice;
- appropriate supervision;
- awareness of the child’s capabilities;
- appropriate activities;
- communication and trust between the parents and the provider as well as the child and provider;
- relevant training and qualifications for the activity provider;
- risk assessment for purposeful activity; and
- appropriate insurance coverage.

9.9 Other Aspects of the School Age Childcare Programme - Inter-culturalism and Diversity

9.9.1 Much has already been written about the importance of respecting diversity in childcare in Ireland. The P2000 Expert Working Group noted that

“The provision of childcare in Ireland must acknowledge and appreciate the value of diversity in Irish society.” 67

9.9.2 The views of the P2000 Expert Working Group are equally relevant to the school age childcare setting and accordingly the Working Group on School Age Childcare endorses these views and considers it appropriate to quote them for the consideration of the reader of the present Report:

“The childcare environment must reflect a diverse inter-cultural and anti-discriminatory approach. There should be a wide range of appropriate equipment and images reflecting the background of all children including Travellers and children from other ethnic minority groups. Practices should reflect an approach which does not distinguish between children on the basis of gender. It should also provide an accessible and safe

environment for children who could experience discrimination. In this regard, linguistic diversity should also be recognised and respected by using the child's language and that of the child’s community in childcare.

The Expert Working Group also recognises that, from an equality perspective, there is a great need to support childcare services through the medium of Irish within Gaeltacht areas and outside of them. Parents wishing to access Irish language childcare services for their children also need support...."

9.9.3 The Working Group recommends that school age childcare practitioners enshrine principles of inter-culturalism and diversity of the P2000 Expert Working Group in the programmes of activities and attitudes they are developing in their facilities. They should be inclusive in encompassing those with special needs or who might otherwise be marginalised through a disability, those who are members of the Travelling Community and those from an ethnic minority group.

9.9.4 The Working Group recommends that the school age childcare facility should value the diverse ethos of Irish society, including a positive approach to Irish language and culture.

9.9.5 The Working Group is of the view that activities being organised should also take into consideration the economic, social and cultural backgrounds of the children and should be organised to ensure that all children can participate equally in services without exclusion on financial or other grounds. In planning activities which might necessitate an additional cost on parents, the capacity of the parents to meet that cost should be considered.

9.9.6 The Working Group endorses a recommendation of the National Network for Child Care in the USA which counsels against over-frequent excursions and field trips in school age childcare, noting that this can lead to boredom, burnout and a feeling of 'not again' on the part of both children and staff.
CHAPTER 10
QUALITY SCHOOL AGE CHILDUCARE (2)
KEY ISSUES IMPACTING UPON A QUALITY SERVICE
QUALITY SCHOOL AGE CHILDCARE (2)

KEY ISSUES IMPACTING UPON A QUALITY SERVICE

10.1 Introduction

10.1.1 Chapters 4 and 7 reviewed quality and quality standards in school age childcare from a range of international perspectives. Chapter 8 focused on enhancing our understanding of the school age child and of the principles underpinning a quality service. Chapter 9 explores the school age childcare programme, its collaborative development and the centrality of play.

10.1.2 The Working Group recognises that many issues impact on quality within the School Age Childcare Service, some of which have been referred to in the chapters above. Quality is by its nature dynamic and continuous. Dynamic elements of quality are described and threaded throughout the document. IPPA the Early Childhood Organisation sees these elements as being

more concerned with the unique relationships and interactions that the child experiences within the service."

Quality within the school age childcare service is reflected in the reciprocal, trusting relationships between children, practitioners and parents.

10.1.3 Quality can also be static and its static elements include the physical environment, health and safety and regulation, all of which are explored in this chapter.

10.2 The Physical Environment

10.2.1 In Chapter 6, the Working Group made recommendations that school age childcare could and should be developed in a range of settings as appropriate to local need, some school based, some attached to existing childcare facilities and some in stand alone facilities. No matter what may be the chosen setting for a community, there are a number of key features which should be central to the design of a school age service.

10.2.2 The Working Group makes the following recommendations in regard to the physical design of a school age childcare facility:

- The facility should offer a bright, warm environment;
- It should be accessible by children with disabilities;
- It should have a range of rooms or areas to facilitate more than one activity by a child or group of children at a time;
- It should provide adequate open internal space to facilitate more physical activities including sports and drama, where appropriate;
- It should provide a quiet area for reading, table based activities and homework;
- All areas should be designed for easy and unobtrusive supervision;
- Every room should, as far as possible, have natural light;
- Every facility should have access to an outside play area;

Every facility should have adequate storage to keep the area as clutter free as possible;
- It should be clean and well maintained;
- It should be well insulated to maintain heat and quiet;
- It should include a kitchen area to facilitate the preparation and storage of food and hot drinks for children after the school day;
- It should have suitably appointed toilet facilities.

10.2.3 In making this recommendation, the Working Group is of the view that this list is not exhaustive but that it includes a number of key requirements which can be met without excessive expenditure, no matter which is the chosen delivery mechanism for the service.

Policies and Procedures

10.3 The Working Group believes that each service should collaboratively develop a comprehensive range of policies and procedures as the starting point in the pursuance of quality. Policies and procedures provide guidance, promote good practice and protect children and adults.

Health and Safety

10.4.1 As with all childcare services, the health and safety of the child is of paramount importance. Accordingly the Working Group recommends that every school age childcare facility should prepare a statement with comprehensive health and safety policies and procedures dealing, inter alia, with

- The identification, handling and reporting of accidents;
- Child welfare and protection;
- Illnesses;
- First aid practices;
- Supervision;
- Use of potentially hazardous equipment;
- Regular safety checks on equipment;
- Behavioural problems; and
- Hygiene practices.

10.4.2 To ensure that no child is placed at risk, all staff should be encouraged to undertake first aid training and training in health and safety issues.

10.4.3 All childcare practitioners should be made aware of procedures to be followed in the case of suspected non-accidental injury to children. They should be trained to watch for evidence of such injuries and of other abuses.

10.4.4 In line with Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children and “Our Duty to Care”, all childcare providers should develop their own local procedures and guidance for dealing with child protection and all staff should be informed of and be aware of these procedures.

10.4.5 Every childcare facility should have adequate insurance cover to provide against every eventuality. Both management and staff should be aware of the terms of the facility's insurance and must avoid all activities which do not come within the terms of such insurance.
10.5 **Working in Partnership with Parents**

10.5.1 The role of parents (or guardians or grandparents depending on differing family circumstances) as the prime educators of children is acknowledged throughout the literature, both national and international, on childcare and education. They are also experts on their own children and their differing needs, interests and abilities. The childcare literature also recognises the importance of involving parents in the decision making processes around the delivery of childcare services.

10.5.2 The relationship between the parent and the childcare practitioner is as crucial to the child's well-being within the school age childcare setting as it is in the early years setting. It is widely recommended that a trusting and mutually supportive role be fostered to ensure the free flow of information about key elements in the child's development and well-being.

10.5.3 The Working Group recommends that procedures are put in place in every setting to foster a spirit of co-operation between parents and service managers and childcare practitioners; to facilitate the ongoing sharing of information with parents; and to facilitate parental access to both the school age childcare facility and to childcare practitioners at all appropriate times.

10.6 **The Regulation of School Age Childcare**

10.6.1 The lack of provision in Irish legislation for the regulation of childcare facilities catering for children who have entered into primary school was noted previously. This does not preclude the Working Group from considering the need for regulation of the sector.

10.6.2 The P2000 Expert Working Group on Childcare discussed the pros and cons of notification and registration for childcare in its 1999 work and came down in favour of registration, noting that

> “Registration ... requires the State to register or licence a service as meeting the minimum standards. It also empowers the State to refuse registration and allows for annual review.”

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10.6.3 For the sake of completeness, the recommendation of the P2000 Expert Working Group is reproduced. It reads as follows:

> “Recommendation 1

- The present system of notification should be developed and lead to an amendment of the ChildCare Act 1991, which would provide for a system of registration of facilities and childcare workers.

- All those providing childcare services for one or more children, in addition to their own, including persons employed by the parents of the child, either in the child’s home or in the childminder’s home, should be required to register.

- Relatives (parents, grandparents, siblings, uncles, aunts and step parents) and guardians or foster parents should be exempt from the requirement to register.”
10.6.4 This view led to the first recommendation of the P2000 Expert Working Group which is endorsed and restated by the Working Group on School Age Childcare which recommends an amendment of the primary legislation to encompass the regulation of school age childcare.

10.6.5 In relation to the content of any new Regulations or Guidelines for the Voluntary Regulation of the School Age Childcare Sector, the Working Group recommends that they be standardised to follow closely the regulations and guidelines which emerge following the present revision being undertaken by the Department of Health and Children.

10.6.6 It is recommended that the adult child ratio for centre-based school age childcare should be 1 adult per 8 children.

10.6.7 While the need to amend primary legislation has already been cited as an obstacle to the regulation of school age childcare, the Working Group recommends that a voluntary code of standards be drawn up and a voluntary notification process be put in place to enable school age childcare facilities to notify their local health board. This would incentivise the facilities to attain and maintain high standards, resulting in the delivery of quality childcare.

10.6.8 The Working Group, under its terms of reference, has been asked to develop guidelines for the sector. These have been developed on the basis of the recommendations of this Report and are presented in annexe to the Report. In the absence of regulation of the school age childcare sector, the Working Group recommends that these guidelines be used as a quality standard against which applications for grant assistance under the EOCP might be evaluated and be further developed for use as a voluntary standard for the school age childcare sector.

10.7 Transport and School Age Childcare

10.7.1 Community based School Age Childcare facilities may face problems with regard to the transportation of the client children from their school(s) to the community based facility, and afterwards from the facility to their homes. This problem is equally valid in both urban and rural areas – in urban areas, many children attend school outside their immediate home area – and even those who attend a local school may find that the nearest primary school is located at some distance from their home. This issue also applies to rural areas, and problems in rural areas can be compounded by the dispersed nature of the population. Even where arrangements can be put in place to collect children from school, there are issues with regard to the high cost of insurance cover needed to ensure their protection. In rural areas, the child may be transported from home to school under the School Transport Scheme and while it might be possible to arrange for children to be dropped off at a community based childcare facility, it is possible there might be reluctance on the part of the School Transport Service to assume liability for the conveyance of children to an address other than their home.
10.7.2 The Department of Transport is funding a Rural Transport Initiative (RTI) which supports many projects across Ireland. The aim of the RTI is ‘to support the development of pilot community based public transport projects in rural areas with a view to addressing the issue of social exclusion in rural Ireland, which is caused by the lack of access to transport’. Thirty-four projects are currently supported (almost nationwide), a small number of which are addressing the transport of children to childcare services. There is a growing awareness of the need for legislation regarding safety procedures, and insurance for transportation of specific groups of people (including children and young people).

10.7.3 The Working Group on School Age Childcare recommends that the City/County Childcare Committees, where appropriate, identify the transport needs of childcare groups to the Rural Transport Initiative projects in their respective counties.

10.7.4 The Working Group on School Age Childcare recommends that the Department of Transport introduce appropriate legislation regarding safety procedures and insurance for the transportation of specific groups of people (including children).

10.7.5 The Working Group on School Age Childcare recommends that the Department of Education and Science review the regulations of the School Transport Scheme to facilitate the provision for transport from schools to school aged childcare facilities.

10.7.6 The Working Group also considers it appropriate to make mention of the EU Directive on the use of seat belts and child restraints.\textsuperscript{71}

\textsuperscript{71} EU Directive 2003/20/EC
Chapter 11

Quality School Age Childcare (3) Training
QUALITY SCHOOL AGE CHILDCARE (3)

TRAINING

11.1 Introduction

11.1.1 In addressing the issue of training for School Age Childcare, the Working Group was assisted by the Centre for Social and Educational Research which prepared a briefing report on training provision and qualifications for those working within School Age Childcare services in Ireland for the information of the Working Group.

11.1.2 In its work, the CSER looked at current training provision and qualifications for those working within after-school services in Ireland. They also outline the training courses, accreditation structure and qualifications in Northern Ireland and Great Britain. After-school training in Denmark and Sweden is also briefly described.

11.2 Training for school age childcare currently available in Ireland

11.2.1 A large number of training institutions and training providers offer modules of training in school age childcare. However, at present, the range and focus of courses is quite varied and lacks both cohesion and a comprehensive and structured approach to the needs of this emerging element of childcare. The following paragraphs summarise the training and qualifications known to the Working Group to be currently available in Ireland:

11.2.2 The School of Practical Childcare offers a Certificate in Playwork which is accredited by the NcFE, a UK validating body. The course is offered on an outreach basis and comprises a series of workshops and a distance learning component.

11.2.3 FAS, the national training and employment authority, has developed a Traineeship Level 2 Childcare Programme which offered the possibility of taking a module (of 14 training days duration) in After School Childcare. The Traineeship involves childcare providers (both private and community based) and FAS working together in a dual system of occupational training leading to the award of a National Skills Certificate - Childcare. The minimum requirement of the FAS Traineeship Programme is that workplace training is supervised and conducted by competent individuals familiar with traineeship, mentoring and skills coaching techniques.

11.2.4 A number of BA courses in Early Childhood Care and Education are now offered by the University Colleges and Institutes of Technology, usually covering care and education for the age range 0 to 8 years. These frequently include courses in relation to the After School childcare sector.

11.2.5 IPPA the Early Childhood Organisation provides a range of childcare and adult education training and is an accredited/approved centre for both FETAC and City and Guilds awards. The FETAC Level 2 award, comprising eight modules, is delivered by IPPA the Early Childhood Organisation over a one year period, based on attendance and participation one full day per week and one full Saturday per month with a total of about 250 hours of contact time. The Level 2 includes four mandatory, two generic and two elective modules, the latter being devised locally.
11.2.6 IPPA the Early Childhood Organisation deliver a Level 2 module on School Age Childcare either as an integrated part of a total award or as an individual module. As an individual module, the course contact time allocated is 40 hours. This training is suitable for those who have previous child development knowledge. The training explores the:

- needs and strengths of the school age child;
- physical and affective environments in which children and staff operate;
- role of the adult in supporting development and learning;
- play, leisure and rest activities which occur within the programme and the child’s participation and voice within the planning, implementation and evaluation process;
- operational aspects, both legislative and good practice, of delivering a quality school age childcare service.

11.2.7 The NCNA/NUI Diploma in Nursery Management includes the four divisions of day care: Care of Infants, Toddlers, Pre-school and School Age Childcare. The school age childcare element includes approaches suitable to both integrated School Age Childcare Services and Stand Alone School Age Childcare Services. Part time training for the Diploma lasts two years and comprises nine modules. It is open to managers of a childcare service or to those intending to advance into supervisory or managerial positions in childcare. It concentrates on issues arising from the delivery of a full day care service for children and their parents from 0 - 12 years. Built upon prior learning, the Diploma is awarded based upon attendance at lectures, successful completion of assessment procedures (oral and written examinations, essays and projects). The central emphasis is placed upon the use of a learning log and the development of resource packs.

11.2.8 The Network for After School Support (NASS) - FETAC module in After-School Support Skills has been developed as an elective module for the FETAC Level 2 in Youth Work. This module may also be used as an elective in a range of appropriate vocational areas for example, childcare, community and health services. The module includes the skills development, activities planning and good practice in after school support services. Candidates undertake practical training with appropriate groups. The course comprises twenty weekly sessions and one residential weekend. Candidates who complete the course will receive a FETAC credit at level two.

11.2.9 Some local initiatives have provided training specifically to address local needs in School Age Childcare. As an example, Action South Kildare delivers a programme for volunteers in local community based after school services. The programme runs over six sessions and covers the following topics

- Introductory session - what is an after school group - the role of the volunteer;
- Rights and responsibilities of the volunteer - behaviour management - difficult behaviour - discipline procedures - agreeing group rules;
- Child protection;
- How children learn - creating a positive learning environment - promoting discipline - bullying;
- Practical arts and crafts - ideas of activities with children;
- Administration issues.
11.3 **Training for After School Childcare in the United Kingdom**

11.3.1 In Britain (England, Wales) and also in Northern Ireland, the appropriate qualification for those working with school-aged children in after-school services is considered to be a Playwork qualification. Not intended exclusively as a qualification for the school age childcare sector, the playwork qualification also attracts students who are interested in specialising in youth work or in other recreational services.

11.3.2 The underpinning approach sees that the playworker

- Develops opportunities for children to play;
- Understands the need to set the stage for play and allow children to explore and develop their own ideas;
- Builds lasting relationships with children;
- Helps to create play choices, including active physical, adventurous and challenging activities.\(^{72}\)

11.3.3 A framework for playwork was established by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority in 1999 and it covers all stages of training and education from entry level to university degree level. SPRITO, which has a specialist Playwork Unit, worked with the Early Years National Training Organisation in the development of this Framework. Like the NQAI in Ireland, the Framework aims to ensure that training and assessment is undertaken to national standards. There are six levels in the Framework, running from ‘entry level’ to Level Five - which is at degree level.

11.3.4 The QCA NVQ Level 2 Certificate in Playwork requires the participant to have 50 hours of practical experience before embarking on a course of study which provides 40 hours of classroom based learning across the following nine topics:

- Role of the playworker;
- Health and Safety;
- Equal Opportunities;
- Legal responsibilities and other relevant legislation;
- Teamwork;
- Planning and promoting play;
- Playwork in practice;
- Building Relationships with children, parents and other staff; and
- Monitoring and evaluating Playwork Practice.

11.3.5 The QCA NVQ Level 3 Diploma in Playwork overseen by the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education (CACHE) is normally a two year full time course, although it may be taken part time in some centres. The Diploma aims to prepare holders to take responsibility for managing the emotional, physical, intellectual, linguistic and social development of children in their care. The course participant undertakes nine mandatory modules and two elective modules.

11.3.6 Level 4 training in Britain places a strong focus on management issues. To gain the HE Diploma in Playwork the candidate must be assessed as competent in 13 units ranging from information management, through service development, change management and human resource management.

\(^{72}\) SPRITO 1999 p 6
11.3.7 Five universities in England and Wales offer playwork qualifications to this level and to degree level. In some instances, the Playwork element is part of a broader qualification such as Playwork and Social Welfare (Newcastle) and Community, Play and Youth Studies (Birmingham).

11.3.8 In Northern Ireland, a number of organisations have been pivotal in the development of after-school provision and training, in particular Playboard and the Northern Ireland Play Assessment Centre (NIPAC). Level 2 and Level 3 awards under the NVQ are available through the City and Guilds and NIPAC while Playboard offers Level 4 training. The University of Ulster awards a Diploma in Higher Education in Playwork following three years of part-time study (one day per week). This latter course is open to those working in the field who must have two ‘A’ Levels to enrol.

11.4 **Swedish and Danish Perspectives on Training for After School Care**

11.4.1 The Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare recommended child-centred educational programmes for both pre-school and school age childcare. Since 1998, there is a single curriculum for the compulsory school, pre-school classes and after school centres. The study period required to become a “fritidshem” pedagogue has increased from two to three years of university education. Students specialise in either Pre-school Education or Education in Recreation and Leisure for school children.

11.4.2 In 1991, the Danish Government brought together three different training programmes - day care training, recreation training and training of staff for day care nurseries and residential institutions - to create a single three and a half year long degree course for social educators. The degree course comprises a number of units including education studies and psychology, social studies and health education, arts and activity subjects such as communications, organisation and management. Students are assessed on placement performance, examination and thesis. The average age of students is approximately 25 years with only 20 per cent of students admitted straight from school leaving exams. The majority are admitted on the basis of past experience in childcare work.

11.5 **The new framework for childcare training in Ireland**

11.5.1 Following upon the recommendations of the P2000 Expert Working Group on Childcare and the creation of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI), significant advances have been made in the development of training programmes and core standards for the childcare profession in Ireland. The Certifying Bodies Sub-Group of the National Childcare Co-ordinating Committee has developed a qualification and training framework for the Early Childhood Care and Education sector.

11.5.2 Concurrently, the NQAI is also building qualifications’ frameworks for many sectors, including training provided for practitioners working with children aged 0 - 14 years. The NQAI has a statutory responsibility to determine the procedures to be implemented by providers of programmes of education and training in relation to access, transfer and progression.

11.5.3 The Working Group is mindful that the work of the Certifying Bodies Sub-Group on the development of a Model Framework for Education, Training and Professional Development in the Early Childhood Care and Education Sector was completed in
Autumn 2002. The framework sets out occupational profiles and core skills for those working with children in the age range 0 to 8 years. It is also intended that the work of the Certifying Bodies Sub-Group will inform the development of training and education programmes leading to nationally awarded and widely recognised qualifications.

11.5.4 The Certifying Bodies Sub-Group identified five occupational profiles and identifies the key intellectual skills and attributes associated with each profile. These can be summarised as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OCCUPATIONAL PROFILE</th>
<th>INTELLECTUAL SKILLS/ATTRIBUTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic Practitioner</td>
<td>• Elementary understanding of core knowledge areas  &lt;br&gt;• Ability to apply solutions to familiar problems  &lt;br&gt;• Ability to receive and pass on information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate Practitioner</td>
<td>• Broad range of core knowledge  &lt;br&gt;• Ability to interpret and reflect on information  &lt;br&gt;• Well developed range of practical skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experienced Practitioner</td>
<td>• Depth of broad range of core knowledge  &lt;br&gt;• Ability to acquire specialist theoretical knowledge  &lt;br&gt;• Ability to access, evaluate and interpret information  &lt;br&gt;• Well-developed range of skills to manage in complex non-routine situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Practitioner</td>
<td>• In depth understanding of comprehensive body of knowledge  &lt;br&gt;• Expertise in particular field  &lt;br&gt;• Innovative reactions to challenging situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert Practitioner</td>
<td>• Mastery of complex, theoretical knowledge  &lt;br&gt;• Ability to critically evaluate knowledge, concepts and practice  &lt;br&gt;• Expertise in research and development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11.6 Training and Professional Development for School Age Childcare in Ireland

11.6.1 Before focusing on the training needs for the school age childcare sector however, it is probably useful to develop an occupational profile for a practitioner engaged in the school age childcare sector. The Working Group is of the view that the school age childcare practitioner should have the following occupational abilities to work effectively in the school age childcare sector.

The ability to

- implement good practice and work effectively in a school age setting;
- understand the specific role of the school age childcare practitioner;
- be aware of, and to be able to implement where relevant, child protection guidelines and procedures;
- assist in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the school age childcare environment;
understand and promote all aspects of child development, education and care;
acknowledge and promote individuality and diversity in all children and to promote equal opportunities and anti-discrimination practice;
work effectively as part of a team;
understand the importance of consultation with children, parents and colleagues;
establish and maintain linkages between schools, other services that could be accessed by children (sport, dance, etc.) and the wider community;
be aware of, and to be able to implement where relevant, all legislation regarding children, equality, discrimination and health and safety; and
establish and maintain all relevant records.

The Working Group has already noted the importance of recognising the special developmental needs of the children who are availing of school age childcare. The fostering of these needs require a special set of skills for the school age childcare practitioner. The Working Group is of the view that the school age childcare practitioner should have the following skills to work effectively in the school age childcare sector.

The skill to:

- build relationships with children, their parents and carers;
- understand and promote the different developmental needs of children and young people availing of a school age childcare service;
- support children's involvement and participation in the life of the service;
- ensure a safe and stimulating environment;
- recognise and provide for the emerging independence of the child;
- promote individuality, balancing the needs of the child and of the group;
- promote fair and caring behaviour;
- develop the cultural awareness of the child; and
- encourage choice and self confidence.

While it was noted previously that a range of modules of courses at various levels offer some training specific to school age childcare, the Working Group recommends that a specific training strand be developed to equip childcare practitioners to provide a high quality service to meet the particular needs of the older age group of four to twelve year old children who are likely to avail of school age childcare. Given the recreational nature of school age childcare, the training programmes to be developed should have a significant practical focus although it is also important to include the theoretical material which is essential to the preparation of a well-informed childcare practitioner and to the contextualisation of school age childcare.

The Working Group recommends that the following skills and knowledge should be incorporated into the courses and modules to be developed for the School Age Childcare sector:

- Quality practice in school age childcare;
- Play and activities;
- Child development;
- Health and safety, including child protection;
- Work experience;
- Role of the school age childcare practitioner; and
- Personal professional development.
CHAPTER 12
THE WAY FORWARD
THE WAY FORWARD

12.1 The Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme 2000 - 2006 is currently making grant assistance available to develop childcare in Ireland through a range of initiatives including the provision of capital grant assistance to both community/not for profit groups and to private childcare providers; grant assistance towards staffing costs of childcare projects which have a strong focus on disadvantage and grant assistance to develop initiatives with a focus on quality improvement.

12.2 The Programme has already set aside a funding allocation specifically for the development of both new and enhanced school age childcare facilities and for the support of staffing costs in school age childcare facilities located in areas of disadvantage.

12.3 Without doubt there is a need for a strenuous campaign to promote interest in the development of school age childcare facilities. The Working Group recommends that a campaign be undertaken to increase understanding of the school age childcare sector, to create awareness of the availability of grant assistance and to promote and encourage community groups, schools and their managing authorities and existing childcare practitioners, both community groups and private providers, to consider the development of these much needed services.

12.4 The Working Group is aware that the City/County Childcare Committees have a strong mandate from the National Childcare Co-ordinating Committee to work with local interests to develop childcare to address local childcare needs. The Working Group recommends that the City/County Childcare Committees be asked to take a prominent role in working with and supporting community groups, private childcare providers and schools' authorities throughout their City/County to develop school age childcare facilities to meet the childcare needs of parents who are in employment, education and training and whose school going children require childcare outside of school hours.

12.5 The Working Group recommends that the City/County Childcare Committees and the National Voluntary Childcare Organisations as appropriate promote awareness of the guidelines developed by the Working Group for the development of a quality School Age Childcare Sector.
# APPENDIX 1

## MEMBERSHIP OF THE WORKING GROUP ON SCHOOL AGE CHILDCARE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Pauline Moreau</td>
<td>Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Chairperson)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Richard Byrne</td>
<td>Department of Education and Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Rosheen Callender</td>
<td>ICTU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Irene Cassidy</td>
<td>National Parents’ Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Catherine Hazlett</td>
<td>Department of Social and Family Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Marguerite Hunter Blair</td>
<td>PlayBoard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Anne Gallagher</td>
<td>ADM Ltd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Hilary Kendlin</td>
<td>Ballymun Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Deirdre McGrath</td>
<td>Centre for Social and Educational Research, DIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Heidi Lougheed</td>
<td>IBEC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Rose McCaffrey</td>
<td>Cavan County Childcare Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Marlene McCormack</td>
<td>IPPA the Early Childhood Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Denise McCormilla</td>
<td>Border Counties Childcare Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Bernadette McDonnell</td>
<td>Department of Health and Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Ann Marie McMorrow</td>
<td>Childminding Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Betty Murphy</td>
<td>IFA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Brian Nolan</td>
<td>Community and Voluntary Pillar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Kieran Donohoe</td>
<td>NYCI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Kerri Smith</td>
<td>Barnardos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Mary Lee Stapleton</td>
<td>National Children’s Nurseries Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Maire Ui Ainin</td>
<td>Forbairt Naionrai Teo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Pauline Walmsley</td>
<td>Cross Border Rural Childcare Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Damian McKeon</td>
<td>Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Secretary to the Working Group)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A number of participants left the Working Group during its life time and it is proper to make reference to their role in the work of the Group. They included:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Margaret O’Connor</td>
<td>Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Katherine Grace</td>
<td>Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Mary Burke</td>
<td>Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Joan Blain</td>
<td>Playboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Karen Anderton</td>
<td>ADM Ltd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Olivia Nolan</td>
<td>Cross Border Women’s Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Orla McEntee</td>
<td>ADM Ltd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Liz Kerrins</td>
<td>Centre for Social and Educational Research, DIT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Hazel Percival</td>
<td>NYCI</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 2

GUIDELINES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF QUALITY SCHOOL AGE CHILDCARE IN IRELAND

Introduction

Both the Expert Working Group on Childcare and the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme 2000 - 2006 which is supporting the development of childcare in Ireland place considerable emphasis on the concept of quality childcare as a key principle which must underpin all childcare development.

The School Age Childcare sector must also be developed to afford our children and their parents the opportunity to avail of a quality childcare experience in those hours when school is closed and parents are at work, studying or otherwise enhancing their skills.

Such a service requires a committed and well trained team of childcare practitioners who care for and relate well to children across a range of ages in a respectful and consultative manner; of adults who understand the need to play a facilitative and supportive role, allowing the child space to develop his or her own ideas to explore real life skills and opportunities to contribute to his or her own care; practitioners who can nurture, support and stimulate and encourage the child and who can build on his/her confidence.

It requires a warm, welcoming and challenging environment, where the child can feel comfortable, accepted and at home and, most importantly, can exercise choice in the daily routine - for example - to engage in the hustle and bustle of free play or can retreat for a quiet period with a favourite book or for a chat with pals.

A quality school age childcare facility will have a set of written policies and procedures to underpin its work which are developed and reviewed in consultation with the children involved with the service, their parents and the staff.

The individual needs and interests of the child will be central to the development of the service, ensuring that all aspects of the service are geared to help them to contribute towards and participate in the range of exciting and challenging experiences being offered by the School Age Childcare facility.

While adopting a positive attitude to Irish language and culture, the School Age Childcare Service must also commit to meet the needs of children coming from different language and cultural backgrounds and of children with special needs and differing abilities.

These guidelines aim to help school age childcare service providers to achieve excellence as they bring new school age childcare services on stream.
Underlying Principles for School Age Childcare

The School Age Childcare Facility should ensure that:

- Children and adults have rights and responsibilities within the service;
- The work and ethos of the service should be underpinned by the United Nations Charter on the Rights of the Child and on the National Children's Strategy;
- Access and participation in the life of the service is open to all stakeholders;
- Children learn and develop in the context of a caring community which values their individual and combined strengths;
- Links with and between the child, family, service and wider community promote a sense of identity and belonging;
- Mutually respectful relationships are fostered and recognised as being central to the life of the service;
- Children, staff and parents engage in meaningful dialogue;
- The voice of the child is heard, respected and contributes to the service;
- Interactions are sensitive and responsive;
- The ethos and practice of the service values diversity and promotes equality;
- The programme is culturally and socially appropriate to the children, families and staff participating in the service;
- Staff and children work together in ways that are respectful and inclusive;
- Children are protected from bullying and abuse;
- The environment provides opportunities for learning;
- The service should provide opportunities for positive experiences which support learning, development and well being for all;
- The programme should promote healthy life choices;
- The programme should offer opportunities for challenge and risk;
- The programme should be recreational and educationally of benefit to children;
- The programme should have breadth, depth and balance;
- Staff should be valued for the knowledge, expertise and life experience they bring to the service;
- The professionalisation of staff should be supported within the service;
- Programmes, policies and procedures should be responsive to the needs of children, families and staff.

Guidelines on the Physical Environment for School Age Childcare

The School Age Childcare Facility should be designed to ensure that:

- The facility should offer a bright, warm environment;
- It should be accessible by children with disabilities;
- It should have a range of rooms or areas to facilitate more than one activity by a child or group of children at a time;
- It should provide adequate open internal space to facilitate more physical activities including sports and drama, where appropriate;
- It should provide a quiet area for reading, table based activities and homework;
- All areas should be designed for easy and unobtrusive supervision;
- Every room should, as far as possible, have natural light;
- Every facility should have access to an outside play area;
- Every facility should have adequate storage to keep the area as clutter free as possible;
• It should be clean and well maintained;
• It should be well insulated to maintain heat and quiet;
• It should include a kitchen area to facilitate the preparation of food and hot drinks for children after the school day;
• It should have suitably appointed toilet facilities.

Guidelines on the Programme of Activities for School Age Childcare

• A strong focus on play must be a core principle and indeed a distinguishing characteristic of school age childcare.
• The school age childcare service should plan and provide a range of play opportunities and activities to support children's social, physical, intellectual, creative and emotional capabilities.
• When planning play opportunities for children, the childcare facility should offer opportunities for a mix of free play and structured play opportunities.
• Homework support should not be the core activity of a school aged childcare service but dialogue with parents and children is critical on this issue.
• Risk taking in the school age childcare setting should be accommodated under circumstances which could include:
  ◆ good practice;
  ◆ appropriate supervision;
  ◆ awareness of the child's capabilities;
  ◆ appropriate activities;
  ◆ communication and trust between the parents and the provider as well as the child and provider;
  ◆ relevant training and qualifications for the activity provider;
  ◆ risk assessment for purposeful activity; and
  ◆ appropriate insurance coverage.

• Each school age childcare facility should set aside a period of time each week to enable children and practitioners to work together to review previous activities and to develop the programme of activities for the coming week.

Guidelines on Health and Safety for School Age Childcare

• Every school age childcare facility should prepare a statement with comprehensive health and safety policies and procedures dealing, inter alia, with
  ◆ The identification, handling and reporting of accidents;
  ◆ Child welfare and protection;
  ◆ Illnesses;
  ◆ First aid practices;
  ◆ Supervision;
  ◆ Use of potentially hazardous equipment;
  ◆ Regular safety checks on equipment;
  ◆ Behavioural problems; and
  ◆ Hygiene practices.

• To ensure that no child is placed at risk, all staff should be encouraged to undertake first aid training and training in health and safety issues.
- All childcare practitioners should be made aware of procedures to be followed in the case of suspected non-accidental injury to children. They should be trained to watch for evidence of such injuries and of other abuses.

- In line with Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children and “Our Duty to Care”, all childcare providers should develop their own local procedures and guidance for dealing with child protection and all staff should be informed of and be aware of these procedures.

- Every childcare facility should have adequate insurance cover to provide against every eventuality. Both management and staff should be aware of the terms of the facility’s insurance and must avoid all activities which do not come within the terms of such insurance.

Guideline on Adult child ratios for School Age Childcare

In a centre based school age childcare facility the ratio should be one adult for eight children

Guidelines on Fostering Partnerships within School Age Childcare

- A spirit of co-operation should be fostered between parents and service managers and childcare practitioners.
- A spirit of co-operation and consultation should be fostered between management, practitioners and children.
- The regular exchange of information with parents should be facilitated.
- Parents should have access to both the school age childcare facility and to the practitioners at all appropriate times.

Guidelines on Training for School Age Childcare

All practitioners working in a school age childcare setting should be appropriately trained.
TREOIRLÍNTE MAIDIR LE CÚRAM LEANAÍ D’AOIS SCOILE AGUS D’ARDCHAIGHDEÁN A FHORBAIRT IN ÉIRINN

Réamhrá

Cuireann an Sainghrúpa Oibre um Chúram Leanaí agus an Clár Comhdheiseanna um Chúram Leanaí 2000-2006, a thacaíonn le forbairt an chúram leanaí in Éirinn, béim mhóir ar an gcóimh cheap go mbeadh cúram leanaí d’ardchaighdeán ina bhunphrionsabal riachtanach i ngach forbairt ar chúram leanaí.

Is gá earnáil an Chúram Leanaí d’Aois Scoile a fhhorbairt, freisin, chun deis a thabhairt do leanaí agus dá dtuismitheoirí leas a bhaint as cúram leanaí d’ardchaighdeán sna huaireanta san a mhbionn an scoil dúntha agus na tuismitheoirí ag obair, ag staidear nó ag feabhsú scileanna ar bhealaí eile.

Éilíonn seirbhís dá sort foireann cleachtóirí cúram leanaithe atá dionggháilte agus dea-oilte, atá combhthábhachtach agus dea-thúsainnach le leanaithe thar raon aoiseanna, ar shliúla atá urramaice, chomhairleach; aosaigh a thugann gur bhfuil ról éiscithe agus tacúil acu, ag ligeann spás leis na leanaí chun a smaointe féin a fhhorbairt, fíoroscileanna saoil a thaisceadh agus a thairgeann dó deiseanna chun cabhrú lena chúram fós; cleachtóirí ar féidir leo an leanbh a chothú, tacú leis, é a spreagadh agus a mhisniú agus cur lena fhéinmhuinín.

Éilíonn si timpeallacht theolaí, fháilteach, dhúslánach, ina mothaíonn an leanbh compórdach, ina bhfuil glacadh leis agus é taithiúchtaí uirthi agus, níos tábhairt ar fós, inar féidir leis roghnu as measc ghnáthaimhmh an lae – mar shampla – páirt a thugadh a bhfuadar an tsaorshúgraidh nó cúlú le haghaidh tréimhshí chuinnis lena roghna lebhair nó chun comhrá a dhéanamh le haghaidh tréimhshí nó chun comhluath ar fhíoroscileanna.

Beidh sraith beartas agus gnáthamh scirofa mar bhonn le haghaidh a cuid den tseirbhise, a dhéanann lena ghnáthaimh lehainm, mar shampla, mar shampla。”

Beidh riachtanais agus spéisíonna pearsanta an linbh ag crot é ar pháirt teachtálaí, bhlochaí, dhúshlánacha, ina mothaíonn an leanbh comhdhéideach, ina bhfuil glacadh leis agus é taithiúchtaí uirthi, inar féidir leis roghnu as measc ghnáthaimh an lae – mar shampla – páirt a thugadh a bhfuadar an tsaorshúgraidh nó cúlú le haghaidh tréimhshí chuinnis lena roghna lebhair nó chun comhrá a dhéanamh le haghaidh tréimhshí nó chun comhluath ar fhíoroscileanna.

Agus dearadh dearach a chlacadh aici a leith na Gaeilge agus chultúr na hÉireann, ní fós, ní áit a bhfuil an tseirbhís um Chúram Leanaí d’Aois Scoile cúram d’hostumh ar pháirt de na riachtanaithe leánaí d’aois scoile a chuireann leánaí d’aois scoile a chuireann sin ar bhun.

Tá sé mar chuspóir ag na treoirlínte seo cabhrú le soláthróirí seirbhise an chúram leanaithe d’aois scoile, feabhas a bhaint amach sna nuasheirbhísí le haghaidh cúram leanaithe d’aois scoile a chuireann siad ar bun.
Bunphrionsabail le haghaidh Cúram Leanaí d’Aois Scoile

Is cóir don Áis um Chúram Leanaí d’Aois Scoile a chinntiú

- Go bhfuil cearta agus dualghais ag leanai agus ag aosaigh laistigh den tséirbhís.
- Go bhfuil Cairt na Náisiún Aontaith um Chearta an Linbh agus an Straiteís Náisiúnta um Leanaí mar bhonn le hobair agus le héiteas na tséirbhís.
- Go bhfuil rochtair an shaol na seirbhíse agus rannpháirtí intí ar fáil ag gach pairtí leasmhara.
- Go bhfoghlaimionn agus go bhforbraíonn na leanai i gcomhtheachas pobail chomhgháith a bhfuil meas aige ar a náir aonair agus ar a náir chomhcheangaíta.
- Go gcothaíonn na naisc le leanbh, teaghlach, seirbhís agus mórphobal, agus na náisc eadartha, cothú féinúlachta agus bainteachta.
- Go gcothaítear goaol chomheascailta agus go n-áithintear iad a bheith ag croiláir shaol na seirbhís.
- Go mbíonn plé éifeachtach idir leanai, foireann agus tuismitheoirí.
- Go gceloistear guth an linbh, go bhfuil meas air agus go gcuireann sé leis an tséirbhís.
- Go mbíonn na hidirghníomhaíochtaí iogair agus freagrach.
- Go dtugann éiteas agus cleachtas na seirbhíse ómós don ilghnéitheacht agus go gcothaíonn siad an comhionannas.
- Go bhfuil an clár oiriúnach, ón taobh cultúrtha agus sosíalta de, do leanai, do theaghlaigh agus don foireann atá rannpháirtí i gcaosain na tséirbhís.
- Go n-oibrionn an fhóireann agus na leanái le chéile ar bhealaí atá ómósach agus cuimsitheach.
- Go gcó察tear na leanái ar bhuláiocht agus ar dhrochtháin.
- Go gcuireann an timpeallacht deiseanna fhoghlama ar fáil.
- Go gcuireann an tséirbhís deiseanna ar fáil d'eachtraí dearfacha a thacaíonn a thacaíonn an fhoghlaim, fornaithe agus dea-hbháil cách.
- Go gcothaíonn an tséirbhís roghanna saoil atá sláintiúil.
- Go dtairgeann an clár deiseanna dúshlán agus fiontraiocht.
- Go bhfacaigh an leanai tairbhe chaithimh aimsire agus aideachais ón gcéad.
- Go bhfuil leithne, doimhneacht agus cothromachtaí sa bhroll.
- Go bhfuil meas ar an eolaí, saineolas agus aithí saoil a thugann an fhóireann leo d'eachtraí deiseanna.
- Go dtacaítear leis an bhfoireann a chur ar bhonn gairmiúil laistigh den tséirbhís.
- Go bhfuil na naisc le leanbh, teaghlach, seirbhís agus mórphobal, agus na náisc eadartha, cothú féinúlachtachta agus bainteachta.
- Go bhfuil an timpeallacht gheal theolaí ar fáil.
- Go bhfuil sí inrochtana ag leanai faoi mhíbhuntáiste.
- Go bhfuil rath ósórdaithe náimhse mór nó ná gníomháiocht amhain ag leanbh nó ag grúpa leanai san am céanna.
- Go bhfuil deiseanna ar fáil d'eachtraí dearfacha a thacaíonn a thacaíonn an fhoghlaim, fornaithe agus dea-hbháil cách.
- Go bhfuil teaghlach agus mórphobal ag rochtáin, pháirtí intí ar fáil.
- Go bhfuil go leor spás agus ceimteocht cheoil inmheánaigh intí chuimhneachtachtaí nó fisiciúla, lena n-áirítear spóirt agus dramaíochtaí, a éascú de réir mar is cúit.
- Go bhfuil an clár oiriúnach, ón taobh cultúrtha agus sosíalta de.

Treoirlinte faoin Timpeallacht Fhisiciúil do Chúram Leanaí d’Aois Scoile.

Is cóir an Áis um Chúram Leanaí d’Aois Scoile a dhearadh ar bhealach a chinntiú.

- Go gcumann an áis timpeallacht gheal theolaí ar fáil;
- Go bhfuil sí inrochtana ag leanai faoi mhíbhuntáiste;
- Go bhfuil raon seomraí nó limistéar intí a éascaíonn níos mó ná gníomháiocht amhain ag leanbh nó ag grúpa leanai san am céanna;
- Go bhfuil go leor spás agus ceimteocht cheoil inmheánaigh intí chuimhneachtachtaí nó fisiciúla, lena n-áirítear spóirt agus dramaíochtaí, a éascú de réir mar is cúit;
- Go bhfuil an clár oiriúnach, ón taobh cultúrtha agus sosíalta de;
Go n-oireann gach limistéar don mhaoireacht éasca neamhbuannúil;
Go bhfuil, oiread agus is féidir, solas nádúrtha i ngach seomra;
Go bhfuil rochtain ag gach áis ar limistéar súgartha lasmuigh;
Go bhfuil leorstóras ag gach áis chun an limistéar a choinneáil chomh saor ó thranglam agus is féidir;
Go bhfuil si glan agus dea-choinnithe;
Go bhfuil si dea-inslithe chun i a choinneáil teolaí agus cuíin;
Go gcoimsionn si limistéar cistine a éascaionn ullamhú bia agus deochanna te do na leanai tar éis an lae scoile;
Go bhfuil áiseanna leithris cuíchóirithe aici.

Treoirlinte faoin gClár Gníomhacht do Chúram Leanaí d'Aois Scoile

Is gá fócas láidir ar shúgradh a bheith mar chroi phrionsabal agus le firinne mar thréith shuntasach de chúram leanaí d'aois scoile.
Is cóir don tseirbhís le haghadh cúram leanaí d'aois scoile raon deiseanna agus imeachtaí súgartha a phleanáil agus a sholáthar mar thaca do chumais shóisialta, fhísiciúla, intleachtúla, chruthaithecha agus mhothúcháin na leanai.
Nuair a bhionn deiseanna súgartha a bpleanáil do leanaí, is cóir don áis chúram leanaí deiseanna a thairiscint le haghadh meascán de shaorshúgradh agus de shúgradh struchtúrtha.
Ní cóir tacaithe d'obair bhaile a bheith ina chroíghníomhaíocht ag seirbhís le haghadh cúram leanaí d'aois scoile ach tá geárghá an cheist seo a phlé le tuismitheoirí agus leanai.
Is cóir go mbeadh ionad ag an bhfiontraíocht i suíomh cúram leanaí d'aois scoile, faoi thosa a chuimsíonn.

Dea-chleachtas;
Maoirseacht chuí;
Feasacht faoi chumais an linbh;
Imeachtaí cuí;
Cumarsáid agus muinín idir tuismitheoirí agus an soláthróir, agus idir an leanbh agus an soláthróir;
Oilúint agus cáiliúilchtaí abhartha do sholáthróir na gniomhaochta; agus
Cumhdach cuí árachais.

Is cóir do gach áis le haghadh cúram leanaí d’aois scoile tréimhse ama a chur i leatáobh gach seachtain chun go mbeidh ar chumas na leanai agus na cleachtóirí oibrithe le chéile, ag athbhreithniú gniomhaochtaí cheana agus ag forbairt an chlár gniomhaochta don tseachtain le teacht.

Treoirlinte Sláinte agus Sábháilteachta do Chúram Leanaí d’Aois Scoile

Is cóir do gach áis le haghadh cúram leanaí d’aois scoile ráiteas a ullmhú ina bhfuil beartais agus gnáthaimh chuimsitheacha sláinte agus sábháilteachta a phléann, inter alia, le

Sainiú, láimheasail agus tuairiscíu timpistí;
Leas agus cosaint leanaí;
Breoitheachttaí;
Cleachtas cheádchabhrach;
Maoirseacht;
Úsáid trealaimh inghuaise;
Seiceáil rialta ar shabháilteachta trealaimh;
Fadhbanna iompair; agus
Cleachtas sláinteachaí.
Lena chinntiú nach bhfuil aon leanbh á chur i bpriacal, is cóir gach ball foirne a spreagadh chun oiliúint a fháil sa chéadchabhair agus ar shaincheisteanna sláinte agus sábháilteacha.

Is cóir gach cleachtóir cúraim leanaí a chur ar an eolas faoi gnáthaimh is cóir a leanacht i gcás gortaithe do leanaí a mheastar a bheith neamhthaíseach. Is cúir gach n-oilfé iad chun faire ar fhianaise i dtáobh gortaithe dá chuid agus drochdú éile.

Ag teacht le Treoirlín Náisiúnta Leanaí ar dTús, maidir le Cosaint agus Leas Leanaí agus “Ár nDualgas Cúraim”, is cóir do gach soláthróir cúraim leanaí a ghnáthaimh agus a threoir aithiúil fein a tharlaíocht chun plé le cosaint leanaí, agus is cúir gach n-oilfé na gnáthaimh seo in iúl do gach ball foirne agus go mbeadh siad ideachacht orthu.

Is cóir go mbeadh leorchumhdach árcharais ag gach gach áis cúraim leanaí chun plé le gach teagmhais. Is cúir gach go mbeadh an bhainistíocht agus an fhoireann araon leasach faoi théarmaí árcharais na háise agus ní foláir dóibh gach gníomhaíocht nach dtagann faoi théarmaí an árcharais sin a sheachaint.

Treoirlín faoin gcóibiúnas idir Aosaigh agus Leanaí ó thaobh Cúraim Leanaí d’Aois Scoile

In áis churaim leanaí d’aois scoile ata ionadh bunaithe is cúir gach go mbeadh coibhneas aosaigh amháin in aghaidh ochtar leanaí ann.

Treoirlinte maidir le Comhpháirtíochtaí a Chothú laistigh de Chúram Leanaí d’Aois Scoile

- Is cúir spiorad an chomhoibríthe a chothú idir tuismitheoirí agus bainisteoirí seirbhise agus cleachtóirí cúraim leanaí.
- Is cúir spiorad an chomhoibríthe agus an chomhairlúcháin a chothú idir bainistíochta, cleachtóirí agus leanaí.
- Is cúir malartú rialta faoi gaisce le tuismitheoirí a chothú.
- Is cúir go mbeadh rochtain ag tuismitheoirí ar an áis churaim leanaí d’aois scoile agus ar na cleachtóirí ag gach am cuí.

Treoirlinte faoi Oiliúint do Chúram Leanaí d’Aois Scoile

Is cúir go mbeadh oiliúint chuí ag gach cleachtóir a oibríonn i suíomh cúraim leanaí d’aois scoile.