

Ireland



Care Work with Children

Whitehall College of Further Education
Childcare Development, City of Dublin
Vocational Education Committee



Education and Culture
Leonardo da Vinci

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1. Introduction

1.1. Dear Student

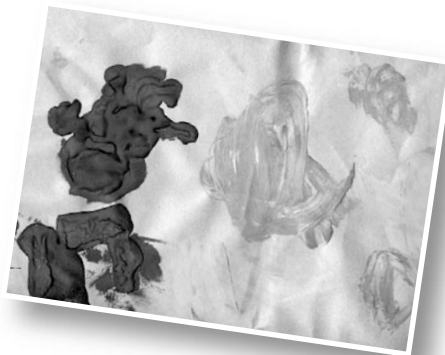
◆ *Welcome to Ireland. We are pleased you are doing your work placement here and hope it is a productive and pleasant time. The purpose of this booklet is to give you an overall view of the development of childcare in Ireland. Its aim is to provide information on Irish childcare services, which continues to change and improve, with the introduction of the government's interest in providing childcare and education to all children.*

The manual takes you through the various childcare settings, history and the education system in Ireland. There is also practical information and an insight into the childcare system in Ireland. In addition to this information there is also a video available, which is set in a day nursery in Dublin. It lets you have an insight into the nursery from the child's and the staff's view point.

There is a lot of information contained in this handbook. It is best used as a reference and guide. Please read the content list and use the relevant material you need at any particular time. A glossary of terms and words used in Ireland in the area of childcare is available.

We trust you will find it a helpful resource in understanding the Irish system.

Best wishes!



1.2. Children's Rights and Social Policy in the EU

◆ The Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989) is the most universally accepted human rights instrument in history. It has been ratified by 191 countries. By ratifying this instrument, national governments have committed themselves to protect and ensure children's rights. It outlines the basic human rights that all children have:

- ◆ The right to survival
- ◆ To develop to their fullest potential
- ◆ To protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation
- ◆ To participate fully in family, cultural and social life

The rights of the Child give lines to social policy and decision making in Europe. Social policy and social protection are seen as factors promoting economic growth (The European Community Treaty made in Maastricht 1992). At EU level, social policy and decision making is restricted in drawing up general guidelines and principles that can be found from different Council's Recommendations and Charters agreed by member states. From an ordinary citizen's viewpoint the question is the national social policy legislation: social policy is a core responsibility of the members states.

The EU has laid down only minimum standards and minimum rights. The European Social Charter defines the

rights of EU citizens on a general level and the implementation of these rights is executed by Member States.

1.3. About Ireland

◆ The republic of Ireland has a population of 4,000,000 and rising due to migration and the economic boom. The main industries are pharmaceuticals, electronics and agriculture / food business. Also tourism has been developed to a high standard. Traditional industries were mostly agriculture and brewing. Dublin is the capital city and one of the fastest growing cities in Europe. Dublin has a population of 1.7 million people.

During the last decade many social changes have taken place, such as an increase in the number of lone parent families and an increase in the number of homes where both parents work. This has led to further developments in the field of early childhood care and education.¹

1.4. Introduction to the Content

◆ The content is contained in six chapters. Some of these contain sub-headings to help the student identify the areas on which they would like information. Following the introduction, Chapter 2

¹ Hayes, 1999. Early Childhood, An Introductory Text, 2nd edition: 21

gives details of a visit to an Irish pre-school to give students an overview (from the child's / parents' perspective) of the childcare facility. Chapter 3 looks at the aims of education care work, including ethical principals, legislation, theoretic orientation and multiculturalism.

Chapter 4 deals with childcare policy and practice in Ireland. This enables you to see the structure of childcare services and their policies. Chapter 5 gives you practical information on the professional childcare worker, looking at their occupational profiles and job descriptions; it also includes information on best practice.

Finally chapters 6 and 7 give a brief account of developments in childcare in Ireland, the past history and the future. Chapter 7 looks at the overall school system and the various progression routes from early childhood up to third level education, including childcare training at present in Ireland.

2. A Visit to an Irish Day Nursery

◆ The following is a case study aimed to give students an insight into a childcare setting in Ireland.

This Day Nursery is located in Dublin's city centre. This Nursery is attached to a large university and caters for children of students and staff at the university. This is a description of a routine day at the Day Nursery, where we can observe staff members and a typical Irish family.



Staff Members at the Centre:

◆ Alexandra Kelly is a nursery nurse who works full time in the 'Wobbler Room'. Alexandra lives in the city center with her parents and walks to work. She is continuing her childcare training in Nursery Management to FETAC Level 3 at evening class as she would like to advance her career to being a supervisor/manager some day.

Doris O'Brien is a nursery nurse who works mornings only. Doris had been working as a full time nursery nurse until her second child Ellis was born. She then requested to work mornings only. Doris has two children – Christopher aged 7 years who attends Primary School and Ellis, 6 months old, who attends the nursery with her mum.

The Wynne Family who attend the centre:

◆ Joe Wynne is 3 years old. He has attended this Day Nursery since he was 6 months old. He is now in the Montessori room where his favorite activity is art and crafts. Joe particularly likes painting with bright colours. There are sixteen children in the Montessori class, 6 boys and 10 girls. They follow the Montessori programme from 09.30 – 12.30 each day. After this they have lunch until 14.00. If the children wish, they can then sleep. The afternoon programme of free play, structured activities and outdoor activities can vary from day to day until 17.30 when the children go home.

Alice Wynne is 1 year old. She started in the nursery when she was 7 months old. Alice is moving from the baby room into the "Wobbler Room". There are six babies in the baby room and eight children aged 1 - 2 years.

Mr. Wynne is a mature student at university. He is studying dentistry and during his free time he calls to the Day Nursery to take his children out for a walk. Sometimes Joe doesn't feel like going out, and on other occasions he doesn't want to return to the nursery.

Mrs. Wynne is the general manager of the catering facility in the college. She works long hours and has a lot of responsibility. Mrs. Wynne got a job promotion after Alice was born and is very thankful that Mr. Wynne has more free time to assist with the children.



The following is an account of an example of a typical day in an Irish Day Nursery. The aim of this is to give students a feel for how the system operates from all perspectives i.e. the childrens', their parents' and the staff of the Nursery.

08.30 - Mr. Wynne is taking the children by car to the Day Nursery today. Mum has left at 06.30 to catch the bus as she is working early at the student canteen. The children eat breakfast at home as breakfast is not provided at the Day Nursery. Both children enjoy their food and have cereal, fruit and a drink of milk. Mr. Wynne packs the bag for the day including lunches and snacks for the children. Fortunately, he also remembers to pack nappies for Alice and Joe's inhaler as Joe suffers from mild asthma and sometimes needs to use it, if he has been running outside.

08.50 - The children are welcomed at the nursery and they help dad hang up coats and store away their belongings. They give dad a good bye kiss and he quickly leaves for a 09.30 lecture.

Doris holds Alice, as she is new to the 'Wobbler Group'. She is given special time to be slowly introduced to the other children, some of whom are shouting rather loudly this morning. Then when all the children have arrived, Doris and Alexandra take out a selection of bricks for the children to play with. Doris helps a small group of children to build a tower and Alice enjoys knocking it down.

Joe is very happy as his best friend, Michael, is back from holidays and has brought him a present of a small car that Joe is delighted with. Clare, Joe's teacher, tells Joe he will have to put it into his pigeon hole until home time as it may get broken or lost during the day. Joe is unhappy about this but does so anyway. As he places the car on the shelf, he asks Clare for reassurance that no other child will touch it. They agree to put it back into the gift-wrapping and put it to the back of the shelf.

10.30 - Doris now takes her midmorning break. While Doris takes her 15-minute break, the Supervisor, Jane joins the wobbler room and tidies up, as it is time to go to the garden. All the children enjoy playing outside. Alice gets excited as her coat goes on. She knows it means playing on the swings.

Doris rejoins the group who are all playing happily outside and checks with Jane if she can remain there so that Alexandra can go on her break as there must be two members of staff with the children at all times. All the children play happily outside and then come indoors for a nappy change before lunch. Nappy changing is not so popular and Alice cries when Doris takes off her coat.

12.30 - This is lunchtime for the wobbler group and they move in to the kitchen where they are strapped safely into high chairs. They are served the lunches provided by their parents. Alice has pasta with tomato sauce and a yogurt. She loves both. After lunch the children are washed and it is bedtime. Each child, wobbler and toddler has his/her own cot. Alice usually sleeps for one and half to two hours.

Alexandra takes her lunch from 13.00 - 14.00. Doris finishes work at 14.00. Anna, who works in the afternoons, joins the team at 13.00. The staff has a small kitchen area in the staff room. Sometimes they go out to a café for lunch.

Joe eats a snack at 11.00 consisting of fruit and yogurt, and his lunch of pasta with tomato sauce, in the dining room at 13.00. He tells Clare he is still hungry and she offers him some bread, which he enjoys. It is then time for quiet time stories and reading. Joe is keen to move to the next activity, which is to complete the painting of the papier-mache balloons that they started some weeks ago. Joe plans to paint his in stripes!

Alice wakes up and is upset initially and Alexandra comforts her whilst changing her nappy.

They then go to the quiet room and play with the cars. When all the children are up and changed they listen to music and play musical instruments.

15.30 - It is time for the afternoon snack, which they eat outdoors, as it is a warm afternoon. Anna moves all the chairs and Alexandra prepares the food. Alice enjoys her fruit but throws her rice cake on to the ground. Parents begin to arrive to collect their children.

16.00 - Only a few children are left in Joe's group so the staff take them to the garden. Joe is delighted to see his little sister playing in the Rock-A-Tot.

16.15 - Mrs. Wynne comes to collect her children. She has been shopping and Joe is inquiring as to the contents of the bags. Mr. Wynne arrives to drive the family home. Alexandra and Clare give both parents a brief account of the children's day and the inhaler is returned. Joe did not need it today. As they leave Joe remembers that his special car is in his pigeonhole and his mum checks with Clare that this is truly his car and a very happy boy leaves the Nursery.

The staff says 'good bye' to the last children at 17.00 and tidy and lock up the Nursery for the day.

3. The Aims of Educational Care Work

◆ This Chapter gives an insight into the Development of Early Childhood Education and Care.

The Irish Government Policy for Development of Early Childhood Education and Care:

The White Paper on Early Education is concerned with children from birth to 6 years. It sets out the objectives of early childhood education as, “supporting the development and educational achievement of children through high quality early education, with particular focus on target groups such as the disadvantaged and those with special needs”.

It sets out a number of guiding principles:

- ◆ Progress will be achieved through a process of consultation, dialogue and partnership.
- ◆ The White Paper proposes early support and intervention for the families of children with special needs.
- ◆ The intention is that such parents should have access to an advisor, and a teacher.
- ◆ Early education providers who receive state funding for development of educational places will be required to meet set standards. Other providers who satisfy the required standards can obtain special recognition through the awarding of a Quality in Education (QE)

3.1. Welfare Policy

◆ The Irish government has recently appointed a Minister for State with Responsibility for Children, and established ‘The National Childcare Strategy’ 1999 - aiming to improve the quality of children’s lives in Ireland. The strategy sets out the government’s vision and plan for children until 2010. The development of the national strategy was one of the recommendations of the United Nations Committee on the rights of the child.

Aims of Early Education

- ◆ The strategy is grounded in six operational principles. All actions to be taken will be:
 1. Child-centered: the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration and their wishes and feelings should be given due regard.
 2. Family Orientated: the family generally affords the best environment for raising children and external intervention should be to support and empower families within the community.
 3. Equitable: all children to have equal opportunity in relation to access and participation in and derive benefit from the services delivered and have

the necessary levels of quality support to achieve this. A key priority in promoting a more equitable society for children is to target those most at risk.

4. Inclusive: the diversity of children's experiences, gender, ability, culture and lifestyles must be recognized and given expression.
5. Action Orientated: services delivery needs to be clearly focused on achieving specified results to agreed standards in a targeted and cost effective manner.
6. Integrated: measures should be taken in partnership, within and between relevant players, be it state, the voluntary / community sector and families; services for children should be delivered in a co-ordinated, coherent and effective manner through integrated needs analysis, policy planning and service delivery.

Early Childhood education and care services should seek to adopt these principles. Translated into practice this would result in services, which are aimed at providing a safe, healthy environment where children are given stimulating programme of activities delivered by competent staff.

A child-centered environment is one, which allows and enables the children to develop to their full potential. Children are provided with good quality play

opportunities to meet their needs throughout childhood. Their optimum well being and development is the priority at all times. Materials and activities provided encourage children's emotional, imaginative, creative, physical, social and intellectual development. An environment where materials reflect accurately and positively the multiracial/ multicultural nature of our changing society is essential.

In summary the aims of early childhood care and education principals should include:

- ◆ All activities are appropriate to the child's age and development stage.
- ◆ A variety of activities to allow opportunities for physical and cognitive development and social skills.
- ◆ Staff involving children in the planning and choice of activities where appropriate.
- ◆ A programme with flexibility - allowing quiet and noisy activities.

3.2. Ethical Principles and Legislation Guidelines

◆ General theoretical orientations of early childhood education and care in Ireland:

During the twentieth century there has been a rapid growth in the area of provision for young children throughout Ireland. This has happened for a wide variety of reasons:

1. The growth of interest among parents in providing a stimulating play experience for their children. This led to the establishment of the 'Irish Pre- School Playgroups Association' (IPPA).
2. The changing structure of the family. There has been a significant increase in the number of children born to and raised by lone parents.
3. An increase in the number of families where both parents work out side the home.

These coupled with changing social and economic conditions have led to increased interest in and development of early childhood education and care.

Recent Legislation guiding early childhood services in Ireland:

Ireland has a recently appointed a Minister of State with Responsibility for Children, and established the National Childcare

Strategy - aiming to improve the quality of children's lives in Ireland. The strategy sets out the government's vision and plan for children until 2010. The development of the national strategy was one of the recommendations of the United Nations Committee on the rights of the child.

"An Ireland where children are respected as young citizens with a valued contribution to make and voice of their own; where all children are cherished and supported by family and the wider society; where they enjoy a fulfilling childhood and realize their potential"²

3.3. Theoretical Orientation / Underpinning Knowledge

Types of Education

Froebel Education in Ireland:

The Froebel method of training was introduced to Ireland in 1862 -it is now recognized under the Department of Education.

The philosophy of Froebel's child-centred and play based learning is prevalent in private kindergartens.

Montessori Education in Ireland

The Montessori method of early education was introduced to Ireland in 1920 by a mercy nun. Today there are many colleges offering Montessori training for teachers in a pre-school setting. Mostly people trained in Montessori work in an early years setting or in Special Education. Unlike Froebel the Montessori method is not recognized by the Department of Education in Ireland.

Steiner Education in Ireland

Rudolph Steiner established the first Steiner School in Germany in 1919. Steiner felt education should lead a child towards clarity of thought, strength of will and sensitivity of feeling. In 1979 the first Steiner training course was introduced through the Dublin Institute of Technology (D.I.T.) Due to demand this course is now offered to degree level and equips students to teach in primary school.

Irish Pre-school Playgroups

In 1969 the IPPA was formed and is now an active agent in the growth of awareness about the importance and value of early play experiences - this experience is provided nationwide. These playgroups work from the same basic philosophy and stress the value of play as a medium of learning.

Naionrai

A number of Irish speaking Playgroups were established called Naionrai. They are run similarly to playgroups but the language spoken is Irish. There are approximately 200 Naionari catering for 2,500 children in Ireland.³

3.4. Multiculturalism

◆ Irish society is rapidly changing.

Ireland is a young state with an increasingly diverse population and a multicultural society. The Irish government has addressed the issues of equality and racism by providing new legislation on equality issues, such as the Equal Status Act, 2000 to assist all of us in ensuring that Ireland is a fair and equal society. By embracing an anti-bias approach we endeavor to meet the needs of children from both minority and majority groups in an increasingly diverse Ireland.

Some principal guidelines for children in a childcare service:

All children are respected and valued equally in the group.

All children's positive identities are fostered.

All families are respected and valued in the group.

All children are assisted to respectfully and effectively learn about difference within the group and learn to interact comfortably with each other.

³Hayes, 1999. Early Childhood – An Introductory Text, 2nd Edition, pps 9-15

All children's home language and traditions are acknowledged and respected.

All children's abilities are positively affirmed.

Children are helped to understand that acting in a boastful way towards others is unfair.

Children should know that they could comfortably stand up for themselves and others in the classroom.

Children learn about difference and will be capable of assigning values to them. It is essential that staff members working with children are aware that their practice enables children to develop

positive attitudes towards race, culture, language gender and disability. Every child is a unique individual and has the right to be respected as such. Children come from diverse socio-economic, cultural and religious backgrounds.

Our aim should be to ensure children feel welcomed and valued and accepted for who they are without fear of being ridiculed or condemned.

There are several organisations, both voluntary and government funded, which are actively involved in developing policy on multiculturalism.



4. Childcare Policy and Practice

4.1. Welfare Policy

◆ The state plays a major role in the social construction of childhood and this begins from the moment of birth. It is a requirement that all births are registered, and public health nurses visit infants in their home on a regular basis. The State regulates which biological parents may retain custody of their children and through the adoption laws, may appoint others as parents of children not born to them. Parents have a duty of care for their children. This includes education. While parents have a constitutional right to choose the type of education their children receive, in practice there is a legal requirement to send children to school. Four Governmental departments have major responsibilities in the lives of children see 6.1.⁴

4.2 General Goals of Family Policy

Families in Ireland - changes that have taken place.

◆ For most children the family is the social context within which initial relationships are built and an understanding of the world absorbed. Traditionally, children were viewed as dependent within a structure and, this

subordinate status of children is reflected in constitutional references to the family in Ireland. The structure and dynamics of Irish families have altered considerably over the last 30 years and there is now a diversity of family types. Children are increasingly reared in lone parent family units or in reconstituted families, although the majority of children grow up in two parent households. Family size has also changed. As recently as 1981, the vast majority of children had an average of three siblings and a two-parent household, with a father in full time employment and a mother who was a full time homemaker. Due to the economic boom of recent years there was a shortfall in the labor market. This and the increase in equality legislation lead to the government strategies to encourage women to enter the work force. It has then increased the level of employment of mothers of young children, which probably marks the most important change in the lives of young children, particularly the pre-school age group. The home situation of under five-year olds has changed significantly in Ireland, especially in recent two decades. Other influences are:

⁴ Cleary, Anne (Ed) 2001. Understanding Children Vol.1, Introduction

- ◆ **Marital Breakdown**

Increasing levels of marital breakdown have two main implications on young children.

Firstly increasing the number of children in poverty and welfare dependence. Secondly reducing the level of contact with the non-custodial parent.

- ◆ **Mothers' Participation in the labour force**

This may affect the balance of power within families, and in turn, has influenced child-rearing practices.

- ◆ **Fatherhood**

Fathers are becoming more involved in child-rearing and are less likely to adopt a patriarchal authoritarian role.⁵

These changes in family patterns have prompted debates on the effects this may have on children.

- ◆ The nature of household is not the most significant factor, but rather the quality of the relationships and this applies to lone parent families also.
- ◆ The fact that studies have shown that a higher proportion of children in lone parent households have scholastic or emotional problems, compared to those living in both parent households.

In conclusion: It is fair to state that a significant role of early childhood services is to provide a positive stable environment for pre-school children.

4.3. Service Providers



- ◆ Early Childhood services, like other social services are provided by a mix of private, state and voluntary. The section that follows gives an overview of the involvement in the various areas.

Private Provider

The Majority of childcare services available are privately owned and run. Parents fees that are charged by the term, month or week finance these facilities. Private providers can apply for funding for capital expenditure if they are located in a disadvantaged area. No other funding is available to them. The number of children being catered for can vary from four children upward. There is no upper limit.

⁵ Cleary, Anne (Ed). 2001. Understanding Children Vol 2, Chapter 1 & 2

State Provider

This type of facility is run and funded by the government. The Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform offer funding usually for specific target groups e.g. unemployed parents, lone parents or parents wishing to access training or employment from a disadvantaged area.

Voluntary Provider

Voluntary groups have been set up to meet local needs. Parents and staff would be involved in fund raising to meet the financial needs of the facilities.

The three types of providers detailed above aim to provide a range of services to meet the needs of the children and of the families.

The Population using services

◆ Due to economic progress and labour market restructuring during the 1990's when Ireland's GNP per capita was estimated to be 97% of EU average, there has been an increase in women's participation in the work force. This means that childcare provision has had to increase.

Labour force participation by mothers.

◆ The Irish government has made childcare priority expenditure under the national development plan 2000-2006 and funding in excess of €317 million

has been allocated specifically to childcare over the term of the plan. The funding being provided will have as its main objectives an increase in both supply and quality of childcare facilities together with the introduction of a coordinated approach to the delivery of childcare services. Each of the country's 32 counties has developed a County Childcare Committee' to assess its childcare needs.

Eligibility for Services

- ◆ Parents wishing to use childcare facilities can seek information on facilities in their locality by contacting the pre-school officer assigned to the Regional Health Board. Then parents are asked to visit the facilities and usually place their name on a waiting list.
- ◆ Word of mouth is the most useful way parents find a suitable service in their locality. Facilities that are recommended by other parents are generally preferred.
- ◆ The majority of services are private fee paying and generally the cost would reflect the service provided. Large waiting lists exist in most facilities. Priority on the waiting list is usually given to siblings of children who are already attending the facility.
- ◆ Institutions or companies provide some childcare facilities. This type of facility is usually only available to parents who have direct contact with the facility i.e. are employed by or are students of such an organisation.

Quantity and quality of provision

◆ Overall state expenditure is targeted largely at those children who are in disadvantaged circumstances and/or deemed to be at risk. It has also been noted that a number of sources are sometimes used to fund different aspects of the same childcare service. Furthermore much of the expenditure on childcare arises as a by-product of other activities, and does not improve childcare provision as an objective.⁶

There are a large number of sessional and small-scale services and facilities unevenly spread across the country. Considerable proportions of the facilities are housed in purpose built or renovated buildings i.e. attached to businesses or educational facilities.

There is very limited public provision for early childhood education. The Department of Education and Science's involvement in early education has focused principally on pilot interventions for children who are disadvantaged or who have special needs.

4.4. Structure of Childcare Services

◆ The following information represents the Irish childcare provision. This section covers a variety of childcare services that are available in Ireland. In particular please note the information on child-staff. Also included is information on the

health care system in Ireland and how it relates to children.

General services

- Sessional care
- Full day care
- Child minders
- Drop in centres
- Parent and toddler groups
- After school care - Homework
- Clubs

Specialized services

- Pre-school for the disadvantaged
- Children with special needs

While the services can be divided into a number a categories there is much flexibility in the service provision i.e. a full day care facility may also provide an after school service

Sessional care

◆ Sessional care is provided in Ireland in a number of different ways:

- ◆ Sessional pre-school services provide care for 3 1/2 hours per day.
- ◆ Play group
- ◆ Crèche
- ◆ Montessori group
- ◆ Naionrai
- ◆ Play Scheme
- ◆ Community run service
- ◆ These facilities provide a safe, healthy, caring environment for children aged 2-5 years. Experi-

⁶ National Childcare Strategy, 1999, Chapter 2, p10

enced, qualified and competent staff delivers a suitable, stimulating, programme of activities.

- ◆ Naoinraí is a pre-school education programme through the Irish language. These services receive some funding from the Department of Art, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands.

Full day care

Day Nursery & Crèches provide for children aged 2-5 years for more than 3 1/2 hours per day. The general opening hours range from 07.00 until 18.30 or 19.00 hours. Children will be in designated rooms in accordance with their age group. All children under the age of 2 years will be provided with sleeping facilities. Food that is nutritious and varied is provided. An outdoor play area is also provided. All services caring for three or more children are notified to and monitored by the health board under the regulations of the Pre-School Act. Payment for this type of service varies from locality to locality but typically can cost circa €124 per week.

Child minders - Au pairs

The only regulation to date for child minders is that if a child minder is caring for 3 or more children who are not of the same family they must notify the Health Board. Child minders can care for children in their own homes or in the child's home. A caring comfortable and

homely environment must be provided. The child minder should have undertaken some preliminary childcare training.

'**Child Minding Ireland**' - is a state body set up to support child minders in Ireland. It provides services such as training in First Aid, Child Development, Fire Safety and updated information about various societies e.g. Sudden Infant Death. If parents require a child minder they can contact this agency and be assured that the child minder is being cleared by a doctor for a health check, by the police to ensure they do not have a criminal record and that adequate insurance is in place.

Drop in Centres

This service is provided while a customer / client avails of a service or attends an event e.g. in shopping centres or leisure centres. The children can stay for a maximum of three hours. The Area Health Boards also monitor these. The benefits to the child from these facilities include the opportunity for socialization and play stimulation.

Parent and Toddler Groups

A large number of mothers who stay in the home would avail of the local mother and toddler group meetings. Children of all pre-school ages attend with their parents/ guardians. These groups usually meet in the local community centers or halls, to

facilitate children to play and social integration. Parents can meet others on a social level whilst children can play in a suitable environment. Often there is no cost involved or small contribution for this service.

After School Care - Home work Clubs

This type of care is offered to children aged 5-12 years. The children are generally given a snack and supervision with activities or homework. A suitable programme of activities including sport and indoor games is offered.

Homework clubs - cater for children aged 5-12 years the main focus is to complete homework that has been set from school. The benefits of homework clubs are that the children can get assistance if required. It also promotes concentration when supervised in a relaxed way. Children may be offered assistance by the supervisor that has knowledge of the subjects they are studying. Some parents may have difficulty in assisting their children in certain subject areas.

Specialised Care

The area of specialised care is well developed in Ireland. As this handbook has been written for students who are participating in the Leonarda da Vinci Student Exchange Programme and as these areas are outside the remit of the project very brief information is included here.

◆ Pre-School Provision for Children who are Disadvantaged

The Early Start pilot programme aims to tackle educational disadvantage through targeting children who are considered to be at risk of not reaching their potential within the educational system. The state provides 98% of the tuition costs for a maximum of three hours per day for the regular national school year.

◆ Children under 4 years with Special needs

The visiting teacher service of the Department of Education and Science provides a service to young children with visual and/or hearing impairment, from the age of 2 years. The Health Boards and/or voluntary bodies provide services for young children with severe or profound disabilities. The services are provided in Child Education and Development centres and are generally run by a Clinical Director and staffed by nurses who have a qualification in mental handicap, with teaching inputs supplied typically by Montessori trained teachers. Play therapists are also employed in these centres.

Child Ratio in Early Childhood Care

Sessional Services

This care is provided by private and/or voluntary agencies. A second adult should be present on the premises at all times. The maximum number of children to be catered for in one room in a sessional group is 20 children.

Age	Adult / Child ratio
0-6	1-10

Full day care

This care is provided by private and/or voluntary agency. Where a full day care service also caters for children who do not attend on a full time basis, the adult / child ratio for sessional care should apply.

Age	Adult / child ratio
0-1 year	1:3
1-3 years	1:6
3-6 years	1:8

Child minders

A single-handed child minder should look after no more than six children including her own children all of whom are under six years of age, and no more than three of these should be under one year of age. A child minder should have a telephone on the premises, or a second person available, to cope with emergencies.

Age	Adult / child ratio
Under 6 years	1 Adult : 6 children

Note: No more than 3 children should be under one year.

Drop-in centres

This care is provided in areas such as commercial facilities for example shopping centers or leisure facilities. It is understood that the majority of drop-in centres cater for children of over two years of age. A second adult should be present at all times.

Age	Adult / Child Ratio
1-6 years	1:8
Under 12 months	1:3

In summary: All of the above facilities must notify the pre-school officer in the Health Board Area. The area Health Boards are committed to ensuring a quality pre- school service for children. Pre-School officers inspect pre- school facilities and provides guidance and support to the facility. The inspection will include assessing facilities for the care of the child, suitability of the premises, equipment and staffing levels.

Having completed early childhood care and education at the age of approximately 5 years. Most children attend state funded National Schools.

Legislation on school attendance requires children to attend school (or receive an education) from the age of 6 years.

National (Public) Schools are state funded and children attend schools closest to their homes.

Private Schools are fee paying and are the choice of parents.

4.5. Benefits for Families

Rationale for a Childcare Strategy Policy Document in Ireland

In particular Ireland's economic and social history has influenced the development of childcare please see 3.2. However, a lack of co-ordination and a lack of state support have characterized childcare policy in Ireland. This resulted in a crisis in supply, variability in quality and the lack of systematic development. The proposed National Childcare Strategy is a comprehensive attempt to address and resolve the issues of childcare services for children aged 0 to 12 years.

'The National Childcare Strategy, January 1999, Report of the Partnership 2000 Expert Working Group on Childcare'
- has three key elements:

Quality in Childcare

The aim to ensure good quality childcare services and equal access for all children to quality services is central to the purposed national strategy.⁷

Social Benefits of Childcare

Much of the research in this area has focused on the potential effectiveness of quality early childhood education in combating later educational and social disadvantage.⁸

Economic Benefits of Childcare

There are clear economic benefits from the provision of childcare. Firstly, the lack of accessible, affordable and appropriate childcare facilities prohibits many women from accessing employment and employment related opportunities. As a result, the economy is deprived of services and expertise of a significant element of its potential labour force.⁹

⁷National Childcare Strategy-January, 1999, Chapter 6, p. 52

⁸National Childcare Strategy-January, 1999, Chapter 6, p. 53

⁹National Childcare Strategy-January, 1999, Chapter 6, p. 54

Benefits of early childhood programmes

CHILDREN	CHANGES IN	NATURE OF THE CHANGE
	Psycho-Social Development	improve cognitive development (thinking, reasoning); improve social; development (relationships with others); improved emotional development (self-image, security); improved language skills.
	Health and Nutrition	increased survival rates, reduced mortality, and improved hygiene; improved weight / height for age; improved micronutrient balance.
	Progress and Performance In Primary School	higher chance of entering, less chance of repeating; learning and better performance.
ADULTS		
	General Knowledge	health and hygiene, nutrition (in relation to own status).
	Attitudes and Practices	leadership skills; health and hygiene, preventive medical practice, opportune treatment, nutrition: improved diet
	Relationships	improved self-esteem, better husband-wife, parent-child, and child-child relationships.
	Employment	caregiver free to seek or improve employment prospects, new employment opportunities created by a programme, increased market for programme-related goods.

COMMUNITIES

Physical Environment

sanitation, spaces for play, new multi-purpose facilities, increased solidarity, increased participation of women, community projects benefiting all.

INSTITUTIONS

Efficiency

better health attention through grooming or changed user practices, reduced repetition and dropout in school.

Effectiveness

greater coverage

Capacity

greater ability, confidence and/or changes in organisation, improved methods and curriculum content.

SOCIETY

Quality of life

a healthier population, reduced work days lost to sickness, a more literate and educated population, greater social participation; an improved labour force; reduced delinquency; reduced infertility and early births; reduced social inequalities.¹⁰



The Health Care System - for Children in Ireland

The following is a list of health issues that will be recorded for each child:

1. Birth History
2. Feeding
3. Examination at approximately 6 weeks
4. Examination at approximately 9 weeks
5. Time table for immunization
6. Dental record

Birth History

- the following is a sample form that will be completed by a doctor or nurse.

Date of Birth: _____

Place of Birth: _____

Birth weight: _____

Length: _____

Head circ.: _____

Duration of Pregnancy (weeks): _____

Complications of pregnancy: _____

Method of delivery

Normal _____ Forceps _____ Caesarean Section _____ Other _____

Condition at birth:

Resusitation required yes _____ no _____

Special care nursery yes _____ no _____

Newborn Examination:

Perinatal problems: _____

Physical Findings to be followed up: _____

1. Heel Prick Test (Guthrie); Date: _____

2. Feeding: Breast _____ Bottle _____

3. BCG: Given _____ Not given _____

Date: _____ Signature: _____

Feeding the new born:

In Ireland breast-feeding is strongly encouraged and the following record is kept:

Breast -feeding only: for _____ weeks
Formula feed only: for _____ weeks
Solids given: at _____ weeks
What solids were given first? _____
Any feeding Problems? _____

At six weeks Doctors examine babies for the following:

Development		Growth	
Smiles	_____	Weight (gm)	_____
Fixes gazes on mother's face	_____	Head circumference (cm)	_____
Follows movement with eyes	_____	Length	_____
Startles to loud noises	_____		
Made out of child's sight	_____		
Examinations			
Fontanelles: _____	Lungs _____	Femoral pulse: _____	
Eyes: _____	Abdomen: _____	Arms: _____	
Mouth: _____	Back: _____	Legs: _____	
Heart: _____	Anus: _____	Hips: _____	
Muscle Tone: _____	Genitals: _____	Skin: _____	

Remarks and advice _____

Immunization discussed _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Immunizations:

Babies and children immunizations are available free of charge from the family doctor, health board and generally administered in schools.

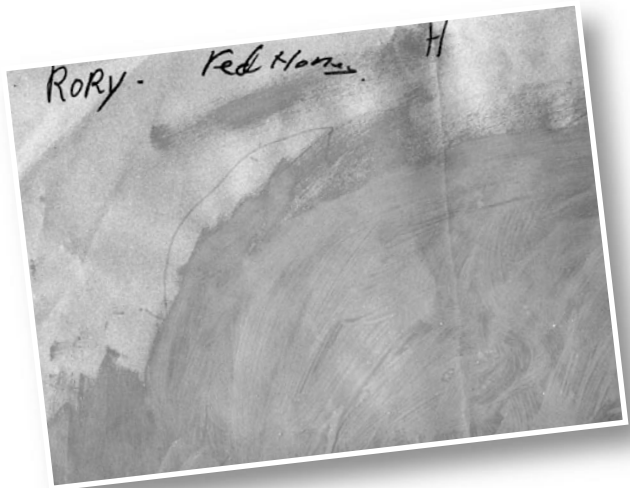
The timetable for immunization:

Age	Immunization
Birth - 1 month	BCG
2 Months	Diphtheria (3 in 1) Tetanus Whooping Cough Hib, Oral Polio Meningococcal C
4 Months	Diphtheria (3 in 1) Tetanus Whooping Cough Hip, Oral Polio Meningococcal C
6 Months	Diphtheria (3 in 1) Tetanus Whooping Cough Hip, Oral Polio Meningococcal C
15 Months	Measles } Mumps } (MMR) Rubella }
4-5 Years	Diphtheria } Tetanus } (3 in 1) Whooping Cough Oral Polio Measles } Mumps } (MMR) Rubella }

This timetable can vary. When babies reach nine months their Parents/Guardians are requested to have a check up with a Doctor to ensure they are developing and healthy. This is an example of the area checked.

Examinations at about 9 months

Findings	Normal	Other
Eyes (vision/squint)	_____	_____
Hearing	_____	_____
Motor Development	_____	_____
Hips	_____	_____
Genitalia	_____	_____
Vocalization	_____	_____
Growth	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____
Vaccinations up to date:	Yes _____	No _____
Comments and Advice: _____		
Doctor Signature: _____ Date: _____		



Dental Care

Parents are asked to keep a dental record for their children. This is a sample of what a Dental Record card might look like:

Age Six Months First (milk) baby teeth appear. Start cleaning with a cotton bud, switch to a small brush when baby molar teeth arrive.

Date:

Comment:

Age one year to
eighteen Months If bottle feeding is continuing avoid all sugar-containing liquids. In order to avoid baby bottle tooth decay do not allow your child to sleep with a bottle in his or her mouth.

Date:

Comments:

Child visits the dentist for the first time on parents check up appointment

Age Six Years First permanent molars appear at the back of the mouth. Supervised cleaning and check need for sealants when molars are fully erupted.

Date:

Comments:

Age Ten Orthodontic check may be needed if the teeth appear crooked. Ensure child has a mouth guard for contact sports.

Date:

Comments:

First orthodontic check.

Follow up care of newborn babies:

When children are discharged from hospital they are then assigned a district nurse who has responsibility for visiting babies in their home and offering advice and support to parents and advice on the baby's health. There is no direct cost for this service to parents.

Further information on the Irish Health Service can be sought from The Health Promotion Unit, Department of Health and Children, Hawkins House, Hawkins St, Dublin 2. (www.doh.ie)

5. The Professional Childcare Worker

◆ This section outlines in detail the occupational profiles. In any childcare setting the ideal complement of staff is to have a full time, qualified Manager / Supervisor in place and that all other staff hold a relevant qualification.

5.1. Occupational Profiles

Occupational Role	Key Tasks and Responsibilities
Specialist	Training and development of personnel co-ordination at national and area level Strategic planning Policy advice
Manager	Overall responsibility for the operation and maintenance of the center/service. Provide an appropriate environment for the planning, implementing and review of programmes for the physical, emotional, cognitive development of children. Keeping all center accounts and records. Responsibility for recruitment Ordering supplies Liaising with all outside agencies Responsibility for drafting, implementing and reviewing policies and operational procedures for the center. Management of personnel and team building Ensure centre complies with all relevant Legislation Liaising with parents

Supervisor

Supervision and developmental support for all staff
Planning implementing and reviewing of all developmental programmes so as to provide for children's physical, emotional, social and cognitive development.
Identifying special needs and planning for appropriate interventions either within the service provided or by other professional people
Acting as a health and safety officer
Keeping children's records
Liaising with parents

Childcare Worker

Day to day responsibility under supervision for children attending the centre
Implementing and reviewing activities appropriate to individual needs so as to provide for children's physical, emotional, social and cognitive development
Observing all procedures as required in terms of care and control, safety and good childcare practice¹¹



¹¹National Childcare Strategy, January 1999, Appendix 3.2

5.2. Job Descriptions

◆ This section outlines in detail some job descriptions for employees in childcare positions. A job description is a summary of the tasks and responsibilities of the jobholder. It should include the main purpose, the responsibilities and accountabilities involved.

Childcare Supervisor / Manager

◆ Purpose and scope of the post: the crèche supervisor will ensure the care and well being of the children attending the facility and will be responsible for the day to day running of the facility.

Hour of work: 35 - 40 per full time, 20 -15 hour for part time or job share.

Rate of pay: €17,776.33 - €25,394.76

Essential Skills, Qualifications and Experience:

- ◆ Recognized childcare qualification
- ◆ At least four years experience in the childcare field, including one-year supervisory experience.
- ◆ First aid up to date
- ◆ A good knowledge of childcare policy
- ◆ Excellent knowledge and awareness of Health and Safety requirements
- ◆ Good experience of identifying development needs of children and organizing activities to meet these needs

- ◆ Good organisational and administrative skills
- ◆ Good team leadership skills
- ◆ Excellent interpersonal and communication skills

Key Duties and Responsibilities

- ◆ Liaising regularly with the management in relation to issues affecting the facility in order to ensure a smooth running project.
- ◆ Arranging appropriate staffing ratios, ensuring structure, monitoring and recording issues such as sickness, attendance, holiday leave and payment.
- ◆ Ensuring the staffing ratios are at all time within the recommendations of the Health Board.
- ◆ Recruitment and selection of new staff as required
- ◆ Ensuring the day to day smooth running of the facility
- ◆ Ensuring the Health and Safety standards are maintained within the facility and the childcare regulation and guidelines of the building are adhered to.
- ◆ Reporting appropriately any accident or concern relating to children or staff to the management.
- ◆ Ensuring that all equipment used satisfies health and safety requirements and providing guidance for staff in this regard.

- ◆ Liaising with the management in order to arrange supplies and resources for the facility
- ◆ Providing on going training, including day to day training for the staff.
- ◆ Identifying development needs of the children attending the facility.
- ◆ Organizing developmental activities for children attending the facility.
- ◆ Evaluating the progress of the children and keeping regular records of their progress
- ◆ Providing appropriate supervision and support for crèche staff.
- ◆ Other tasks that may be relevant to the post may be delegated from time to time by the management or its nominee.

Childcare Worker

◆ Purpose and scope of the post: The childcare worker will ensure the care and well being of children attending the facility.

Reporting to: Childcare Supervisor

Hours of work: 35- 40 hours (for full time position)

Rate of pay: €16,500 - €19,600

Essential skills, qualifications and experience:

- ◆ Recognized childcare qualification
- ◆ At least two years experience in childcare.
- ◆ First aid up to date.
- ◆ A good knowledge of childcare policy.
- ◆ Knowledge and awareness of the health and safety requirements.
- ◆ Good experience of identifying the development with in a team the needs of children and organizing activities to meet these needs.
- ◆ Open to attend relevant training provided.
- ◆ A clear knowledge of the facility policies and procedures manual.
- ◆ Excellent interpersonal and communication skills.
- ◆ Good ability to work as part of a team

Key duties and responsibilities:

- ◆ Day-to-day responsibility under supervision for children attending the facility.
- ◆ Implementing and reviewing activities appropriate to individual and group needs so as to provide for children's physical, emotional, social and cognitive development.
- ◆ Observing all procedures as required in terms of care and control, safety and good childcare practice.
- ◆ Choosing, organizing and maintaining equipment and materials.
- ◆ Contributing to the compiling and updating of children's records
- ◆ Attending relevant training offered.
- ◆ Reporting any accident or concern regarding children to the supervisor.
- ◆ Implementing the facility polices and procedures.
- ◆ Working as part of a team.
- ◆ Liaising with parents.
- ◆ Other tasks that may be relevant to the post may be delegated from time to time by the supervisor or management.

Job advertisements

Sample Advertisements:

1.

Blanchardstown Youthreach Crèche

- (a) Full Time Crèche Supervisor
- (b) Full Time Childcare Worker

Qualifications and Experience:

Childcare Supervisor The successful candidates will require a childcare Qualification and knowledge of best childcare practice. At least three years experience in the childcare field, with a minimum of one year management/ supervisory experience in addition to good interpersonal and communication skills will also be a requirement.

Childcare worker

The successful candidate will require a childcare qualification and at least two years experience in the childcare. Good interpersonal and communication skills will also be a requirement.

Further information and application forms are available on request from the undersigned on receipt of a large S.A.E. (51c)

The latest date for receipt of applicants is 5.00p.m.
on Friday _____ December 2002.

2.

Tiny – Tots Crèche – Green hills, Hallway, Rathgar, Dublin6.

Childcare Workers Required

Full time childcare workers required for a baby room caring for
6 children aged 3 months – 1 year.
Competitive rates –Immediate start date.

For further details phone Libby: 01 66661666

Recruitment procedures

◆ The recruitment and selection process for Childcare Supervisors and Childcare Workers for either a new position or an existing vacant position arising is processed in the following sequence.

The Job Description: As samples are outlined in 5.2. The details of each job description are the responsibility of the board/manager. This description is a sum-



mary of the tasks and responsibilities of the jobholder. This description is drawn up and available for prospective candidates.

Conditions of Employment: These are details of salary, pensions, annual leave and the duration of the contract to be agreed before the position is advertised.

Application Forms: These forms can be used to establish the person's skills and experiences required for the position.

Advertising the position: The method of advertising can be for example a newspaper advert as highlighted previously or through a recruitment agency.

Short listing: At least two members of the Interview Board must assess the applications against the agreed criteria, to shortlist candidates whom will be invited to interview.

Interview: An interview board must plan specific areas of questioning for each member of the interview board. Questions can be based on the selection criteria as specified in the job description.

Referee report: This report provides additional information about the candidate(s)

Offering appointment: Candidate should be informed if they are successful or not as soon as possible and offered the post in writing.

Recruitment and selection procedures are subject to the provision of the 'Freedom of Information Act, 1997'.

5.3. Guidelines for Best Practices

◆ The following section provides information on Best Practice Guidelines for the childcare sector.

1. Guidelines

To achieve good practice in early childhood services it is vital that all regulations are adhered to. Policies and procedures should ensure the health, safety and security of children at all times. Sections A, B, C, represent an outline of childcare practices, which are essential to achieve this.

Key Guidelines

- ◆ Establish clear aims and objectives
- ◆ The provision of a broad well-balanced and developmentally appropriate curriculum.
- ◆ The provision of a variety of learning experiences, which are active, relevant and enjoyable.
- ◆ To develop warm and positive relationships: children need to feel welcome, secure and valued, if they are to learn effectively at home or in the service.
- ◆ The provision of a well-planned, stimulating, secure and healthy environment.
- ◆ A commitment to equal opportunities and social justice for all.
- ◆ Systematic planning, assessment and record keeping.
- ◆ Satisfactory adult: child ratios, continuity of care, and consistent staff development.
- ◆ Partnership with parents, liaison with the community.
- ◆ Effective procedures for monitoring and evaluating the quality of practice.
- ◆ Appropriate behaviour management policy and procedure

Communication and Collaboration

- ◆ Parents: The policy of parent involvement is based on an understanding of the importance of a partnership between parents and staff in the best interest of the child.
- ◆ Key Worker: Each child and family is allocated a specific member of staff, who will provide continuity between home and service and who has 'special' responsibilities for the children and family.

- ◆ **Multidisciplinary Networks:** Practice based on a multi-disciplinary approach involving professional groups doctor, therapy, and special needs is proven to serve the best interests of the child. More recently time is invested in the development of links with local organizations. These organizations would include specialist early childhood care and educational resource libraries and refugees agencies. Liaison with any agency, which will benefit the care of children, is to be recommended.

Multidisciplinary networks are important to provide a quality service, which is inclusive of diversity.

Work Methods for You - the Student

- ◆ While on work placement in a childcare facility in Ireland. Whilst each childcare facility is guided to operate within the regulations there are significant variations in practice. These variations are based on working conditions and the training level of personnel.



1. Tasks the students are asked to carry out will vary from facility to facility and each student will be given details prior to the start date.

2. Duties will be outlined by the facilities supervisor in writing and followed up with a tour of the facility.

- ◆ Students should be over sixteen years of age
- ◆ The duration and timing of placement will be agreed in advance of the placement.
- ◆ Procedure for being absent and requesting time off agreed
- ◆ The students are requested to read all the facilities policies and procedures as part of their induction.
- ◆ Students should not work unsupervised with individual or groups of children.
- ◆ Students should not carry out any duties without first consulting with the supervisor.
- ◆ Students are obliged to familiarize themselves with the policies and procedures regarding protecting themselves and others.

For further information please see:
Job descriptions - Key duties.

6. Developments in Childcare

Introduction as outlined in 3.2 Ireland has only recently developed its childcare and education structure

6.1. Present Day:

◆ The Government Departments with Responsibility for Early Childhood Area:

1. The Department of Health and Children
2. The Department of Education and Science
3. The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
4. The Department of Social Community and Family Affairs ¹²

1. **The Department of Health and Children**

This department has the role on behalf of the state in the lives of Ireland's pre-school children. Developmental testing, immunization programmes, school health check-ups, etc are organized, funded and overseen by the health boards on behalf of this department. A Minister of State with Special Responsibility for Children is attached to this department.

2. **The Department of Education and Science**

This department plays a major role in the lives of children during primary, second and third level education and training programmes. It sets the curricula and examinations. Because of the competitive entry to third level education it determines the number of students entering different occupations. However a Further Education Sector offers an alternative access route to third level and this includes the Childcare Sector.

3. **The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform**

This department is responsible for legal matters, including criminal law. This Department has a major impact on the lives of children, e.g. through legal proceedings concerning custody, childcare, adoption orders and the detention / supervision of young offenders. This Department administers broad ranges of legal age limits to childhood. Children are legally prohibited from purchasing alcohol in a pub (under 18 years of age), drinking alcohol in a pub (under 18 years), driving a car (under 17 years) or having a job (under 15 years).

6.2. Future Plan - National Policy

4. **The Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs**

This department is of great significance in the lives of the more impoverished sections of the child population. Income support is offered to them as dependents of adults (parents or guardians) who have qualified for benefits or assistance on a variety of grounds such as unemployment, illness, disability, or lone parenthood. The amount payable varies depending on the scheme under which they qualify and on their place in the family. A universal monthly payment - child benefit - is available in respect of every child, regardless of means.

'The degree of fragmentation of responsibility for children between different departments has been seen as an obstacle in the delivery of appropriate services to them. The recently established National Children's Office is expected to provide coherence between the work in various departments and agencies in relation to children.'¹³

◆ The principal objective of the government policy in regard to early childhood education is:

To support the development and education achievement of children through high quality early education, with particular focus on the target groups of disadvantage and those with special needs.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child has the potential to be a valuable agent of change for children. Following the plenary hearing in January 1998 the UN Committee issued its concluding observations on the state of children's rights in Ireland. This Concluding Observations (CRA, 1998) provide a valuable framework for action in furthering the implementation of the convention. Among the principal recommendations are that Ireland:

- ◆ Adopt a comprehensive National Strategy for children; in cooperating the principles and provisions of the convention.
- ◆ Amend the Constitution of Ireland to accord specific recognition to the rights of the children and to encompass all the principles of the convention
- ◆ Consider the establishment of an independent monitoring body, such as an Officer of Ombudsman for Children.

¹²Cleary, Anne (Ed). 2001. Understanding Children Vol 1, p.xx.

¹³ Cleary, Anne (Ed). 2001. Understanding Children Vol.1, p.xx

- ◆ Strengthen co-ordination between government bodies dealing with children's rights
- ◆ Ensure the development of closer relationships between the statutory and non - governmental sectors
- ◆ Take immediate steps to address the problems of child poverty and ensure that all families have adequate resources and facilities.
- ◆ Systematically promote and facilitate children's participation in decisions and policies affecting them¹⁴

In conclusion, this strategy has the potential to change the way children are viewed in Ireland and to strengthen their rights. It identifies six operational principles:

- ◆ Child-Centred
- ◆ Family Orientated
- ◆ Equitable
- ◆ Inclusive
- ◆ Action Oriented
- ◆ Integrated

The three goals:

1. Children have a voice in matters that affect them
2. Children's lives will be better understood
3. Children will receive quality support and service to promote all aspects of their development

In conclusion, it is vitally important the principals and goals are included in practice.



7. The Education and Childcare Training

◆ In this, the final chapter, the information takes you through the education system from 6 years of age onwards. Children generally begin at some type of pre-school, prior to entering primary school at approx. 5-6 years. Children having completed primary school then enter second level or Secondary School

until they are approximately 18 years or have completed the final examination which is the 'Leaving Certificate' at higher or ordinary level depending on the student's ability and choice. Pending on the level of achievement and interest many of students will attend university or third level education.

7.1. Educational System

Facility	Approx. age groups
Further Education courses/ University	18 - upward
▲	▲
Second level	13 years -18 years
▲	▲
Primary School	5 years -12 years
▲	▲
Pre - school	2 1/2 - 5 years
▲	▲
Childcare Facilities	3 months - 2-1/2 year

7.2. Childcare Training and Qualification

◆ There is a range of training courses leading to qualifications in Childcare. The Education (Qualifications and Training) Act, 2000 provides the assessment for and recognition of these qualifications. The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland was set up in February 2001 under the Act.

At present there are no minimum standards concerning the education component of services or the training and qualifications of staff. The Report of the Partnership 2000 Expert Working Group on Childcare recommends, among other things, that the childcare sector should aim to achieve the European Commission Network on Childcare target of a minimum of 60% of staff working directly with children in collective services having at least three years training.



Some of the existing training provision and accreditation in the area of childcare is as follows:

- ◆ FETAC - (Further Education Training Awards Council)
- ◆ HETAC - (Higher Education Training Awards Council)
- ◆ Barnardo's - National Children's Resource Centre,
- ◆ Institutes of Technology
- ◆ FAS
- ◆ Irish Pre-school Play groups Association
- ◆ Montessori Colleges
- ◆ Private Colleges
- ◆ University College Cork
- ◆ State Teacher Training Colleges
- ◆ Vocational Education Committees, Post leaving Certificate and Further Education Colleges.

Recent developments include the creation of two main overall statutory awarding bodies, including FETAC and HETAC.

FETAC - (Further Education and Training Awards Council)

HETAC -(Higher Education and Training Awards Council)

Formally known as NCVA (National Council for Vocational Awards)-awarding body, FETAC aims to make quality assured awards in accordance with national standards within a national framework, creating opportunities for all learners in Further Education and training to have their achievements recognized, and providing access to systematic progression pathways.

(www.fetac.ie ; information@fetac.ie)

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National Childcare Census Report- Dublin County Borough, Dublin, Ireland, Government Publication.

Ready to Learn - White paper on early Childhood Education - Government Publication.

Websites

Barnardo's - www.barnardos.ie

Child_strategy@health.irl.ie

Department of Health & Children - www.doh.ie

Early Education - www.oasis.gov.ie

National Children's Nurseries Association - www.ncna.net

National Children's Bureau - www.ncb.org.uk

The National Association for the Education of Young Children - www.naeyc.org

Glossary

After school care: this care is provided to children who attend mainstream national school at the end of their day or during holidays, care, activities and sometimes homework activities are provided to children aged 5 years upwards.

Community based childcare: this service is set up for people in the local area catering for local needs.

Crèche: a facility caring for children by staff. Children are usually aged 3 months-5 years.

Day Nursery: this type of facility usually provides full day care from morning to evening to children aged 3 months -5 years

Mature Student: an individual studying or attending a school/college who is older in years than students moving into college from second level education.

Naionrai: this is pre-school care provided through the Irish language.

Wobbler: this term is used for children usually aged 1 year - 2 year as the age group after baby and before pre-school age. It can also be used to define a group or room in a care setting.

Tweenie: this term is the same as wobbler and can be used to describe a child's age or group/room in a care setting.

Pre -School: this refers to children aged 2 1/2 years - 5 years.

Acknowledgements

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Staff at Whitehall College Creche

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All materials of the project are downloadable for free from partners websites:

www.caritas-mg.net/frame9.htm
www.haus-berg.com
www.davinci.nl
www.whitehallcollege.com
www.hesote.edu.hel.fi/english
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