

Nurturing Skills: The Workforce Plan for Early Learning and Care (ELC) and School-Age Childcare (SAC), 2022-2028

Monitoring Committee 2022-2028

Terms of Reference

1. Background

In December 2021, the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Roderic O’Gorman TD, launched ‘*Nurturing Skills: The Workforce Plan for Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare, 2022-2028*’ (www.gov.ie/NurturingSkills). *Nurturing Skills* aims to strengthen the ongoing process of professionalisation for those working in early learning and care (ELC) and school-age childcare (SAC).

Early years educators, school-age childcare practitioners and childminders play a key role in supporting children’s development and well-being, working in partnership with families. Recognising their central importance for the quality of provision, *Nurturing Skills* aims to support the professional development of the workforce and raise the profile of careers in the sector.

Commitments in *Nurturing Skills* are organised under five pillars:

1. Establishing a career framework;
2. Raising qualification levels;
3. Developing a national Continuing Professional Development system;
4. Supporting recruitment, retention and diversity; and
5. Moving towards regulation of the workforce.

Successful delivery of commitments under the five pillars will be supported by three "key enablers" that are identified in *Nurturing Skills*:

- Improvement in pay and conditions of employment;
- Coordination of the quality support infrastructure; and
- Ongoing engagement with the profession.

Nurturing Skills follows through on commitments related to the workforce in *First 5* (<https://first5.gov.ie/>), the whole-of-Government strategy for babies, young children and their families. *First 5* set out a transformative vision for ELC and other policies for young children for the period 2019-2028. It included a range of commitments related to the workforce for ELC and SAC, including the development of a new Workforce Plan for ELC and SAC, to include childminders, and a target of achieving a graduate-led workforce by 2028. *Nurturing Skills* sets out a series of actions to meet these commitments over the lifetime of *First 5*, and includes an implementation plan for the first three years (2022-2024).

Implementation of *Nurturing Skills* will be led by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY), working in collaboration with the Department of Education and other Departments and agencies.

2. Role and functions of the Monitoring Committee

The role of the Monitoring Committee is to oversee implementation of *Nurturing Skills*. The Monitoring Committee will be chaired by DCEDIY and will include representatives of relevant Government Departments, Agencies and the ELC/SAC workforce. The Monitoring Committee will

meet biannually. The Monitoring Committee will develop a core indicator set for monitoring progress, and will submit an annual progress report on implementation to the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, which will be published. The Monitoring Committee will carry out a mid-point review by 2025 that will consider any possible amendments that may be needed to the Workforce Plan in light of the progress of implementation, and will inform the development of a second implementation plan.

To that end, the Monitoring Committee shall:

- a) Agree its Terms of Reference.
- b) Advise on the selection of a core indicator set for monitoring progress and on any changes to the core indicator set during the course of implementation.
- c) Monitor the activities and outputs related to progress in implementation of *Nurturing Skills*.
- d) Consider issues that affect the implementation of *Nurturing Skills*.
- e) Advise on means to address high-level operational or cross-sectoral challenges arising in the implementation of the plan.
- f) Consider and approve annual progress reports before they are sent to the DCEDIY Management Board and to the Minister and published.
- g) Carry out a mid-point review by 2025 that will consider any possible amendments that may be needed to the Workforce Plan in light of the progress of implementation, and will inform the development of a second implementation plan, and which may include a consultation process.
- h) Review Terms of Reference after one year and at the mid-point review. Terms of Reference to be amended following these reviews if required.

Where appropriate, the Monitoring Committee may establish bespoke sub-committees to address particular issues arising in implementation.

3. Chairperson

DCEDIY will chair the Monitoring Committee.

4. Membership

The Monitoring Committee will include representatives of relevant Government Departments, Agencies and the ELC/SAC workforce. Organisations invited to nominate representatives to the Monitoring Committee are listed below.

Nominated members are asked to ensure that they attend all meetings. Alternative members may be nominated to attend meetings, subject to the prior approval of the Chair.

The Monitoring Committee will remain in place for the full term of *Nurturing Skills* (2022-2028). If members need to be replaced, organisations are asked to advise the Monitoring Committee Secretariat promptly.

The Monitoring Committee may co-opt additional members as required to provide relevant expertise. In line with commitments in *Nurturing Skills*, additional members may include a representative of a professional association, once a professional association has a sufficient number of members to count as representative and has reached sufficient organisational scale to carry out the core functions expected of a professional association.

4.1. Membership List

DCEDIY, Principal Officer, ELC/SAC Quality Unit

DCEDIY, Head of ELC/SAC research

Department of Education, Early Years Education Policy Unit

Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media

Better Start

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)

Two representatives of the ELC/SAC workforce, nominated from among members of the Stakeholder Group that participated in the development of *Nurturing Skills*. (All organisations that were members of the Stakeholder Group were invited to nominate themselves for consideration. DCEDIY appointed two nominees on the basis of set criteria that were communicated to Stakeholder Group members in advance and reflected the capacity of the nominee to represent an ELC/SAC workforce perspective at the Monitoring Committee.)

The Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science cannot, at this time, provide a permanent representative to the Monitoring Committee. They will provide advice and support on relevant issues as required.

5. Secretariat

DCEDIY will provide administrative support to the Monitoring Committee. This will include recording minutes of the meetings and circulating, via email, the agenda, draft meeting minutes and other relevant documentation in advance of the scheduled meetings.

6. Meetings and proceedings of the Committee

The Monitoring Committee will meet at least biannually. Meetings may be online, in person or a hybrid. Notification of meeting times, dates and locations will be made by the Monitoring Committee Secretariat in a timely manner.

The proceedings of the Committee are confidential and a member shall not, without the consent of the Chair, disclose confidential information obtained by that member in the course of their duties.

The purpose of the Monitoring Committee is to oversee the implementation of the *Nurturing Skills* actions. Members are asked to use other fora if there are particular issues that they wish to address that fall outside the remit of the Monitoring Committee.

Decision-making will wherever possible be by consensus. All members of the Steering Group commit to work constructively to reach agreement, and to respect the confidentiality of the Group's discussions. Where there are ongoing differences of view, the Chairperson will determine the most appropriate means of reaching agreement.

Members are asked to advise the Secretariat if they have any accessibility requirements for meetings and meeting documentation.

Additional meetings of the full Monitoring Committee or a subgroup of the members may take place as required.