



An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth

National Action Plan for Childminding 2021 – 2028

Annual Progress Report 2021 - 2022

January 2023



**National Action Plan
for Childminding**
2021-2028

Prepared by the Steering Group for the
National Action Plan for Childminding
2021 - 2028

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	2
2. Overview of the work of the Steering Group.....	3
3. Overview of the work of the Advisory Groups	4
4. Consultations with Childminders.....	6
5. Initial mandatory training programme	7
6. Supports for implementation of the National Action Plan for Childminding.....	8
Appendix.....	10

1. Introduction

The Steering Group of the National Action Plan for Childminding (NAPC) was formed in September 2021 following the publication of the NAPC in April of that year. The Steering Group's overall purpose is to drive, oversee and monitor the implementation of the National Action Plan for Childminding 2021 – 2028. The Steering Group's Terms of Reference require it to provide an annual progress report to the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. This is the first annual progress report, covering the period 2021-2022.

2. Overview of the work of the Steering Group

The Steering group met for the first time in September 2021 and have met seven times to date. The Steering Group have approved the setting up of the four advisory groups and their terms of reference.

The key actions of the Steering Group in its first year include:

- The Steering Group reviewed, amended and approved the role profile prepared by the Training and Supports Advisory Group.
- The Group agreed that the initial training programme should be significantly smaller in scale than a major level 5 award, and they have reviewed and agreed the features of the initial training programme.
- At the final meeting of 2022, the Steering group reviewed and agreed the foundation training content overview and agreed that the Training and Supports Advisory Group should engage with the e-learning consultant to continue the development work.
- The Steering Group approved a request from the Stakeholder Engagement, Consultation and Communication Advisory Group for the services of an external communications consultant to support engagement, communications and consultation, including helping reach those childminders who do not currently engage with any services and may prove to be hard to reach.
- The Steering Group reviewed the recommendations on childminder-specific regulations from the Regulation and Inspection Advisory Group. There is further work to be done on outstanding regulation issues, to be considered by the Steering Group in early 2023. The Steering Group agreed that consultation should proceed with childminders in early 2023 on the key proposals on regulations.
- The Steering Group agreed to the proposed changes to the Childminding Development Grants as recommended by the Financial and Funding Supports Advisory Group.
- The Steering Group have had two presentations on the work of other organisations. Graeme McAlister gave a presentation on the Childminding in Scotland: Scottish Childminding Association ELC Audit 2021 and Workforce Update. Bernadette Orbinski Burke made a presentation on the work of Childminding Ireland.

The minutes of the meetings of the Steering Group are published on the website of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) [here](#) or by going to www.gov.ie/childminding and clicking on Latest news, information and upcoming events.

3. Overview of the work of the Advisory Groups

The implementation of Phase 1 of the NAPC, is supported by four Advisory Groups:

- Funding and Financial Supports
- Training and Supports
- Stakeholder Engagement, Consultation and Communication
- Regulation and Inspection

Each Advisory Group has at least three childminders represented, and the meetings are held in the evenings to facilitate their attendance. The membership lists of the Advisory Groups and the Steering Group can be found in the Appendix.

Funding and Financial Supports Advisory Group

The Funding and Financial Supports Advisory Group met for the first time in June 2022 and have convened five meetings to date. The Advisory Group have devised a number of childminder scenarios – different types of childminders, in different financial circumstances – that will allow the group to test proposed funding supports to ensure that they achieve NAPC objectives.

The Advisory Group have reviewed the Childminding Development Grants and made recommendations to the Steering Group which should make the grants both more attractive but also useful.

The Advisory Group have also explored the provision of an IT grant to support childminders with registration, and will consider this proposal further.

Training and Supports Advisory Group

The Training and Supports Advisory Group met for the first time in November 2021 and have met ten times in total.

The group reviewed the (Nurturing Skills) Training and Supports for Childminders Working Group recommendations regarding the provision of foundation training to childminders. The Advisory Group developed a role profile that would inform the creation of the foundation training programme. The Advisory Group developed a proposal on features of the training for approval by the Steering Group before beginning to develop a detailed plan for the programme. The Advisory Group recommended that childminders and other stakeholders should be consulted on the training programme at different stages of development, when their opinions and observations could be incorporated into the programme, rather than pilot a completed version. During 2022-23, the Advisory Group will be working with an e-learning consultant to devise on-line components of the programme to ensure it is engaging and incorporates best e-learning practice.

The Advisory Group have begun to discuss the next phase of training support and expect to be working on this and the creation of the foundation training programme content in early 2023.

Stakeholder Engagement, Consultation and Communication Advisory Group

The Stakeholder Engagement, Consultation and Communication Advisory Group held its first meeting in November 2021. It has met a total of nine times to date. The group has worked on producing a request for tender for the services of a communications expert to assist with strategic approaches to engagement, communications and consultation with childminders, in particular to help reach out to childminders who do not currently engage with any of the services or support agencies. It is hoped that this communications expert will be in place in early 2023.

Consultation guidelines were drawn up by the Advisory Group to ensure consistency when any Advisory Group sets out to consult with stakeholders on their work.

Regulation and Inspection Advisory Group

The Regulation and Inspection Advisory Group was set up in June 2022 and has met 10 times to date. This group was tasked with advising on the development of appropriate and proportionate regulations for childminders by summer 2023. The Advisory Group have put forward recommendations to the Steering Group regarding regulatory requirements under a number of headings including:

- Numbers and ages of children that can be accommodated in a childminding service
- Premises – minimum floor space, rooms available, outdoor areas, safe sleep spaces;
- Garda vetting; safe-guarding and child protection; first aid; foundation training; insurance
- Supervision
- Administration of medication
- Visitors

This work is an iterative process, with preliminary feedback from the Steering Group to be shared with the Regulation and Inspection Advisory Group as they continue this work.

4. Consultations with Childminders

Consultation processes taking place during Phase 1 of the NAPC have built on prior consultation processes that underpinned the development of the NAPC, including:

- The work of the Working Group on Reforms and Supports for the Childminding Sector, which was established in 2016 and reported in 2018, and which was chaired by Childminding Ireland and brought together a range of stakeholders.
- Consultations with childminders and parents carried out by the Working Group.
- Public consultation (with childminders, parents, and other stakeholders) on the Draft Childminding Action Plan in 2019.
- The participation of childminders, as well as representative bodies for childminders, on the NAPC Steering Group and Advisory Groups.

During Phase 1 of the NAPC, in 2021 a call for expressions of interest was sent out to childminders, asking if they would be available and willing to take part in further consultations. 115 childminders agreed to be contacted. This process was repeated in 2022 and a further 100 agreed to be part of the consultation panel. 75 of the respondents in 2022 were previously unknown to the CCCs.

Drawing on this consultation panel of childminders, during the course of the first year of the NAPC consultations with childminders have been held on:

- The features of the foundation training programme
- The overview of the five units of the training programme
- Financial scenarios for childminders

In addition, 200 childminders were surveyed as part of the Funding and Financial Supports Advisory Group review of the Childminding Development Grant.

5. Initial mandatory training programme

The NAPC commits to introducing a foundation training programme as one of the key requirements for registration with Tusla. It is a commitment in Nurturing Skills: Workforce Plan 2020-2028 to *'Introduce funded childminder specific Foundation Training and a Quality Development Programme to support childminders to meet new pre and post registration training requirements'*. The NAPC commits: *'The Foundation Training Programme will be rolled out during Phase 1, with completion of this Foundation Training Programme being a pre-requirement for registration with Tusla. Introducing foundation level training as a condition of registration with Tusla is important for child safeguarding, for a child-centred approach to quality, and to ensure accountability for public funding (e.g. the National Childcare Scheme).'*

In spring 2022, the Steering Group agreed to initial recommendations from the Training and Supports Advisory Group on the overall shape and nature of the planned training programme. Since then the Advisory Group has continued to develop more detailed proposals for the training programme, with a view to ensuring that all childminders can see themselves reflected in the programme and that it can be applied to the unique and diverse nature of individual childminding services. The Advisory Group have developed proposals in relation to training on issues such as the role of the childminder, environments in a childminding setting, relationships and interactions, childminding as a profession, the business side of childminding, policies, procedures and record keeping, and finance and taxation matters. It is proposed that the training be in a blended format: partly online, and partly delivered through local childminder networks, facilitated by the Childminding Development Officers in the CCCs, where the childminders can be supported and support each other and share their experiences as they work through the units of the training programme. Feedback at the last Steering Group meeting pushed strongly for online training.

In order to ensure an engaging and effective on-line portion of the training programme, DCEDIY has undertaken a public procurement process for an e-learning consultant to help develop the foundation training programme. The Training and Supports Advisory Group will continue to work as the Advisory Group to the development of the training.

Childminders were consulted initially on the basic features of the programme, and again on the overview of the content. They will be consulted again when a full unit of the programme has been completed to ensure that the training programme is achieving its objectives.

Training stakeholders from other agencies, Departments and organisations have also been consulted on the overview of the training programme, with particular reference to language.

Reports on the consultations have been compiled and the observations and suggestions will be brought to the Training and Supports Advisory Group for their consideration.

6. Supports for implementation of the National Action Plan for Childminding

To date there have been a number of appointments to support the implementation of the NAPC:

National Childminding Coordinator

A National Childminding Coordinator was initially appointed in 2019 to support the development of the NAPC, and the role has continued following publication of the NAPC, with the focus now on driving implementation. The National Childminding Coordinator chairs the four Advisory Groups, and facilitates the additional supports the Advisory Groups require. The National Childminding Coordinator liaises with other Departments and with Units in the DCEDIY to support implementation and to ensure readiness of other areas of ELC/SAC support for the extension of regulation and supports to childminders. The National Childminding Coordinator works closely with the CCC Childminding Lead on the work plan of the CMDO team.

CCC Childminding Lead

The CCC Childminding Lead was first appointed in January 2022 to work with the Childminding Development Officers (CMDOs) and the CCCs at local level to ensure that national actions to support the NAPC are implemented effectively through the CCCs and that actions undertaken at a local level have national consistency.

Childminding Development Officers

The Childminding Development Officer (CMDO) team has evolved and expanded over the last 12 months. The initial team of 6 CMDOs that was appointed in 2019-2020 was extended to 12 early in 2022. With the move to implementation of the NAPC and readiness for regulation, and with expansion in the number of CMDOs, the work of the CMDOs has progressed from an initial focus on planning to an increasing focus on working directly with childminders at local level. This has included the delivery of workshops on the business side of childminding – setting fees, taxation and working with parents, as well as a workshop on becoming a childminder.

At a national level the CMDOs have worked on the provision of leaflets for Ukrainian families, a guide to choosing a childminder for parents, a newsletter (3 editions to date) and social media activities to support NAPC implementation. The Facebook page is growing slowly, from 284 followers in May to 710 in November.

Additional funding was secured in Budget 2023 and the CMDO team is due to increase by a further 6 FTEs in 2023. From 2023, no CMDO will be working with more than 2 CCCs. Where

there is a very large population of children or the rural/isolated nature of the county makes sharing a CMDO difficult, the CMDO will only have one CCC area. Some of the CCCs are expected to offer a half-time position, and as a result it is envisaged that the 18 FTE posts will translate into 22 CMDOs, working across the 30 CCCs from early 2023.

The CMDOs, under the management of the local CCC Coordinators, will be working directly with childminders to deliver a number of actions including piloting the development of staffed local networks, delivery of Always Children First Training, foundation training and regulation and registration supports.

Over the last year, the CMDO team have seen the number of childminders engaged with the CCCs rise from 981 in January to 1091 at the end of September.

The Becoming a Childminder workshop was offered 8 times with 78 childminders attending. In June/July 6 childminder specific core funding workshops were held and 49 childminders attended.

To date, 21 business side of childminding workshops have been held with 266 childminders attending.

Appendix: Membership of Steering Group and Advisory Groups

Steering Group

Name	Organisation
Martina McGovern	Better Start
Áine Brummell ¹	Childcare Committees Ireland
Becky Sullivan Lynch	Childminder
Sinéad Moran	Childminder
Michelle Grant	Childminding Development Officer
Bernadette Orbinski Burke	Childminding Ireland
Julie Ahern ²	Children's Rights Alliance
Treasa Quigley	City/County Childcare Committees, Childminding Lead
Anne-Marie Brooks (Chair)	DCEDIY
Toby Wolfe	DCEDIY
Karen O'Sullivan ³	DCEDIY, National Childminding Coordinator
Marc Baille	Department of Health, Northern Ireland
Clare Downey	National Parents' Council
Graeme McAlister	Scottish Childminding Association
Fiona McDonnell	Tusla

¹ Previously Treasa Quigley, CCI

² Previously Saoirse Brady, CRA

³ Previously Sharon Boles, DCEDIY National Childminding Coordinator

Regulation and Inspection Advisory Group

Name	Organisation
Martina McGovern	Better Start
Áine Brummell	Childcare Committees Ireland
Ann O'Donnell Kelly ⁴	Childminder
Eilish Moore	Childminder
Aileen Reynolds	Childminder
Mary Walsh	Childminder/Childminding Ireland
Heather McColl	Childminding Development Officer
Treasa Quigley	City/County Childcare Committees, Childminding Lead
Margot Loughman	DCEDIY
Edel Kirwan	DCEDIY
Karen O'Sullivan ⁵	DCEDIY, National Childminding Coordinator
Monica Cassidy	Department of Education Inspectorate
Clare Downey	National Parents' Council
Mike Corcoran	Tusla
Breda Cloney	Tusla

⁴ Previously Liz Hanrahan, Childminder

⁵ Previously Sharon Boles, DCEDIY National Childminding Coordinator

Training and Supports Advisory Group

Name	Organisation
Ann Lane	Better Start
Carol Dillon	Childcare Committees Ireland
Rebecca Gregg ⁶	Childminder
Sue Mahon ⁷	Childminder
Nathalie Duffy Saive	Childminder
Mary Donnelly	Childminder/Childminding Ireland
Rachael Ryan	Childminding Development Officer
Treasa Quigley	City/County Childcare Committees, Childminding Lead
Karen O'Sullivan ⁸	DCEDIY, National Childminding Coordinator
Ann Fanning	ETB Ireland
Barbara Kelly	QQI
Fiona Collins	Tusla

⁶ Previously Fiona Murray, Childminder

⁷ Previously Deirdre Walsh, CCI

⁸ Previously Sharon Boles, DCEDIY National Childminding Coordinator

Stakeholder Engagement, Consultation and Communication Advisory Group

Name	Organisation
Aileen Kelleher ⁹	Childcare Committees Ireland
Thamzen Byrne	Childminder
Betsy Kehoe ¹⁰	Childminder
Tara Collins	Childminder
Ger Galvin ¹¹	Childminder/Childminding Ireland
Orla McKeon	Childminding Development Officer
Treasa Quigley	City/County Childcare Committees, Childminding Lead
Karen O'Sullivan ¹²	DCEDIY, National Childminding Coordinator
Clare Downey	National Parents' Council
Helen Rouine	Tusla

⁹ Previously Deirdre Power, CCI

¹⁰ Previously Maura Noonan, Childminder

¹¹ Previously Lara Hughes, Childminder/Childminding Ireland

¹² Previously Sharon Boles, DCEDIY National Childminding Coordinator

Funding and Financial Supports Advisory Group

Name	Organisation
Assumpta O'Neill	Childcare Committees Ireland
Caroline O'Grady	Childminder
Aisling McCaughey	Childminder
Laura O'Reilly	Childminder
Cornelius Collins	Childminder/Childminding Ireland
Denise Quinlan	Childminding Development Officer
Treasa Quigley	City/County Childcare Committees, Childminding Lead
Matthew Duffy ¹³	DCEDIY
Karen O'Sullivan ¹⁴	DCEDIY, National Childminding Coordinator
Clare Downey	National Parents' Council
Andrew Mulkeen	Pobal

¹³ Previously Oonagh Fleming, DCEDIY

¹⁴ Previously Sharon Boles, DCEDIY National Childminding Coordinator

**Plaza Miesach, 50-58 Sráid Bhagóid Íochtarach,
Baile Átha Cliath 2. D02 XW14**

Miesian Plaza, 50-58 Baggot Street Lower,
Dublin 2. D02 XW14

T +353 1 647 3000

www.gov.ie