



Purpose	National Action Plan for Childminding – Steering Group – Meeting 7
Date	30 th November
Venue	WebEx
	Minutes
Attendance	<p>In attendance: Anne-Marie Brooks (Chair, DCEDIY), Karen O’Sullivan (National Childminding Coordinator, DCEDIY), Toby Wolfe (DCEDIY), Michelle Grant (Childminding Development Officer), Martina McGovern (Better Start), Treasa Quigley (CCC Childminding Lead), Bernadette Orbinski Burke (Childminding Ireland), Julie Ahern (Children’s Rights Alliance), Clare Downey (National Parents Council Primary), Fiona McDonnell (Tusla EY Inspectorate), Becky Sullivan Lynch (Childminder), Sinéad Moran (Childminder), Graeme McAlister (Scottish Childminding Association), Áine Brummell (CCI)</p> <p>Invited Speaker: Rachael Ryan (Childminding Development Officer)</p> <p>Secretariat: Julia Pycinska-Taylor (DCEDIY)</p> <p>Apologies: Marc Bailie (Department of Health, Northern Ireland)</p>

1. Minutes and matters arising

The minutes of the last meeting (7th September) were agreed. There were no matters arising.

2. Recommendations from the Advisory Group (AG) on Regulation and Inspection

- Following feedback from the Steering Group (SG), the proposals will form the basis for consultation in early 2023, though it was noted that the policy paper was drafted for consideration by the SG rather than itself being a document for consultation. Detailed drafting of legislation will draw on consultation findings.
- Additional proposals had been agreed by the AG but, due to staff illness, were not included in the paper. Some regulatory issues remain outstanding and will be considered when the AG reconvenes in January. It was noted that some aspects of regulations (e.g. training requirements) were already set in the National Action Plan.
- A key issue discussed was the proposed inclusion of a childminder’s own children in the proposed maximum numbers. It was noted that there is variation between jurisdictions on this issue. Potential impact on childminders’ financial sustainability was discussed. Queries were also raised on the restriction to two children under two years old, given the focus many childminders on this age group and the high care needs for all age groups.
- There was discussion of the distinction between pre-registration requirements and regulations relating to post-registration practice. The registration process itself will be discussed in further detail by the AG in 2023.
- It was noted that some terms that might be used in regulation (e.g. “adequate” supervision) might be clarified in a Quality and Regulatory Framework (QRF) document, rather than as part of regulations themselves.
- It was clarified that the proposed regulations on minimum floor space differ from regulations for centre-based settings (which require a fixed minimum space per child): rather, it is proposed that the regulator may reduce the maximum numbers of children permitted based on the size of the childminder’s home.

Action: The Steering Group were invited to send in written feedback on the proposed regulations by a date to be confirmed by email, for further consideration by the AG. The Steering Group will have an opportunity to review and approve proposals for consultation before consultation begins.

3. Recommendations from the Advisory Group on Training and Supports on outline content of initial / foundation training programme



- The National Action Plan commits to a pre-registration training programme that is small-scale in nature, followed by a more substantial Quality Development Programme (QDP) post-registration.
- There will be a blended approach to the training, with some online and some face-to-face, though strong preference for a large proportion of online training was articulated
- It was noted that the name “Foundation Training” was not fixed.
- Two consultations on the outline of the Training Programme were held in November: one with childminders and one with stakeholders.
- It was noted that in Scotland, only new entrants to the childminding workforce are required to undergo induction training. There was discussion of whether Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) should be built into the programme, and it was noted that there may be more scope for RPL in the QDP.
- It was suggested that 15 hours may be too onerous for the programme.
- It was clarified that the proposal is for material on regulations (which are not yet determined) to form an extra module that could be added on.
- The SG feedback will be considered by the AG as it engages with the e-learning consultants.

4. Recommendations from the Advisory Group on Financial Supports on changes to the Childminding Development Grant

- The AG’s proposed changes would bring the rules underpinning the CMDG into line with rules for capital grants available to other providers.
- There was discussion of the benefit of allowing grants at different times of year. While a rolling grant is not possible given budget constraints, a benefit of running the grant process early in the year is that a second grant application process could be opened later in the year if there is budget available. It was also clarified that childminders would have up until November to provide receipts, so as to allow for seasonal purchases not available earlier in the year.
- It was proposed that a separate IT grant should be considered for 2024 to help childminders with online registration processes and funding liaison with Pobal.

Agreed: The Steering Group approved the proposed changes to the CMDG.

5. Draft annual report on 2021-2022, and progress report Q4 2022

- The SG welcomed the draft annual report. It was noted that a summary of today’s meeting is yet to be included.
- Once finalised, the annual report will be submitted to the Minister and then published on the Department website.

Action: A revised draft annual report (incorporating today’s meeting) will be circulated by email to the Steering Group for comments / approval.

6. Advisory Group Updates

- The Stakeholder Engagement, Communications and Consultation AG will be meeting next week to discuss a webinar updating childminders on the implementation of the National Action Plan. Bite-sized information videos will be posted on YouTube to accompany the webinar.

7. CMDO Team – updates

- The team currently has 12 CMDOs, which will rise to 22 (some part-time) in spring 2023. The aim of increasing the team is to allow the CMDOs to work more locally and strengthen engagement with childminders to support the transition to regulation and supports.
- A Christmas newsletter is currently in production.
- The team delivered information sessions on the business aspects of childminding, with 288 attendees so far.
- The team have started broad consultations. It is hoped that future consultations will be conducted at a more local level, rather than requiring travel to Dublin.
- The number of childminders currently engaging with the CCCs is 1,091.



- The CCCs (through Cavan CCC) received 218 applications for the Childminding Development Grant.
- During 2023, the CMDO team will be carrying out action research on the development of staffed local networks, to support identification of appropriate models, including the future aim of being run by childminders, in keeping with the commitments of the Action Plan. It was confirmed that childminders would be able to attend sessions in other counties as suits them, rather than being restricted to their own county.

8. National policy updates

- Budget 2023 has increased NCS subsidy rates from €0.50 to €1.40 per hour, effective from 2nd January. This significant reduction in fees may increase public pressure for acceleration of the timeline for regulation of childminders. It was noted that the timeline is challenging.
- Work on reforming the legislative framework for centre-based services is ongoing; next year it is envisaged that the Child Care Act will be amended, which will allow for the regulation of childminders.
- A review of the ECCE programme has begun. The review will include consideration of the minimum and maximum numbers of children in groups, which has particular relevance to childminding and was a commitment in the National Action Plan.

9. AOB

- It was clarified that existing registered childminders should continue to re-register with Tusla as necessary, given that new regulations are not envisaged to come into force until 2024. Options will be explored for a transition process to register under the new regulations in advance of a mandatory registration date further down the line.

10. Dates for meetings in 2023

Agreed: The Group will continue to meet on a quarterly basis in 2023. Dates will be circulated by email.