



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

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

Annual Monitoring Report on the
Implementation of Nurturing Skills, 2022

March 2023

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1. Acronyms

CCC	City / County Childcare Committee
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DCEDIY	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
DE	Department of Education
DFHERIS	Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
DTCAGSM	Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
ELC	Early Learning and Care
JLC	Joint Labour Committee
NAPC	National Action Plan for Childminding
NCS	National Childcare Scheme
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PACG	Professional Award Criteria and Guidelines
PATD	Professional Award-Type Descriptors
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SAC	School-Age Childcare
TALIS	Teaching and Learning International Survey

2. Introduction

First 5, the whole-of-Government strategy for babies, young children and their families, set out a transformative vision for early learning and care (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 school-age childcare (SAC), including the development of a new Workforce Plan for ELC and SAC, including childminders.

Published in December 2021, *Nurturing Skills, the Workforce Plan for Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare, 2022 – 2028*, sets out a vision of:

'A well-qualified, skilled, diverse and valued professional workforce that is centred on children's rights, needs and potential and that provides quality experiences for children in partnership with families, and which continues to advance its professional development within a coherent and competent system.'

The plan aims to raise qualification levels, to create professional development pathways, and to promote careers in the sector. *Nurturing Skills* aims to achieve these objectives through five Pillars of support for the workforce, each Pillar containing a series of actions to meet these objectives over the lifetime of the plan, and also details an implementation plan for the initial three years (2022-2024).

The *Nurturing Skills Implementation Plan 2022-2024* identifies more than 57 initial actions across Government Departments and State Agencies. This annual report focuses on key achievements in 2022 and describes progress across the five pillars of support with a detailed progress update on each action also presented in tabular form.

The vision and actions in *Nurturing Skills* are in line with the EU Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care, which calls on EU Member States to achieve both well-qualified staff with training that enables them to fulfil their professional role and supportive working conditions, and with the commitment in *First 5* to develop an effective early childhood system that will help all babies and young children to have positive early experiences.

The vision and actions in *Nurturing Skills* are also in line with the National Quality Guidelines for SAC, which stress the importance of staff qualifications and training in ensuring quality services for school-age children, and with the National Action Plan for Childminding 2021-2028, which commits to extending regulation, training, and supports to childminders over the years ahead.

3. Monitoring Committee

Nurturing Skills committed to establishment of a Monitoring Committee to oversee implementation. Relevant state bodies were invited to nominate a representative. In addition, a representative was appointed from among members of the Stakeholder Group which supported the development of *Nurturing Skills*, on the basis of the nominations received.

At its first meeting, the Monitoring Committee agreed that an additional representative on the Committee should be appointed from the Stakeholder Group, in recognition of the importance of stakeholder involvement in the monitoring process. A second stakeholder representative was therefore appointed based on the nominations received.

In line with the commitment in *Nurturing Skills*, the Terms of Reference for the Monitoring Committee also reserve a place on the Committee for a representative of a professional association for the sector, 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. At present there is no organisation that meets this requirement.

Implementation through to 2028 will be overseen by the Nurturing Skills Monitoring Committee. The Monitoring Committee will carry out a mid-point review by 2025 that will consider possible amendments to the Plan in light of progress made and will inform development of a second implementation plan for 2025-2028.

The Monitoring Committee met three times during 2022.

4. Implementation of actions in 2022

Summary of Nurturing Skills action status for 2022

Nurturing Skills Pillars	Complete	In Progress	Not Started	Grand Total
Raising qualification levels: ELC	1	6		7
Raising qualification levels: SAC		4	2	6
Raising qualification levels: Childminding		3	2	5
Developing a national CPD system	1	4	5	10
Establishing a career framework		2		2
Moving towards regulation of the profession		2	1	3
Supporting recruitment, retention and diversity		1	5	6
Key enablers	2	4	1	7
Total actions for 2022	4	27	15	46

4.1 Pillar 1: Establishing a career framework

Nurturing Skills committed to identification and development of professional roles in early learning and care (ELC) and school-age childcare (SAC) over the period to 2028, providing a career framework and career development pathway. Nurturing Skills identified initial roles as:

- Early years educator / School-age childcare practitioner;
- Lead Educator, which is intended to become a graduate role over time;
- Manager (both ELC and SAC), which is intended to become a graduate role in ELC over time.

During 2022 these roles were given legal meaning through forming the basis of the historic first Employment Regulations Orders (ERO) for the sector, which came into force on 15 September. The EROs set different minimum rates of pay for these three roles, with higher minimum rates of pay for Lead Educators and Managers who are graduates. This embedding of a career structure, through incremental rates of pay, of the different roles, including leadership roles within settings, is an important step in the development of a career framework.

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) has committed to promote these defined roles, and the terminology associated with them, in all its communications. An example of this change in 2022 was the use of the new role titles in the Annual Early Years Sector Profile.

Nurturing Skills set a number of targets for raising the qualifications of the workforce. DCEDIY continues to monitor the qualification level targets set out in Nurturing Skills. In the past this process relied on survey data from the Annual Early Years Sector Profile, but from 2022/23 with the commencement of Core Funding partnership agreements data on staff qualifications will also be available through administrative data provided by services. This will provide a more comprehensive basis for assessing qualification levels, given the very high participation rate in Core Funding (94% of services as of the end of November 2022).

Initial data on key indicators for monitoring progress in relation to qualification targets in Nurturing Skills can be found in section 5, Key Indicators, below.

4.2 Pillar 2: Raising qualification levels

Pillar 2 supports aim to enable Early Years Educators and SAC Practitioners, particularly those who are already working in the sector, to achieve the professional qualifications that will, over time, become requirements for the roles they are in. While the achievement of the qualifications required for different roles will, for new entrants into the sector, be a matter for initial professional education, there is a strong focus for the lifetime of Nurturing Skills on supporting existing Early Years Educators and SAC Practitioners to achieve higher qualifications while continuing to work in the sector.

The introduction of Core Funding in September 2022 marked a significant change in the way in which public funding supports and incentivises ELC providers to employ graduates. Between the introduction of the ECCE programme in 2010 and the introduction of Core Funding in 2022, additional funding for staff with relevant degrees was confined to the Higher Capitation payments in the ECCE programme, which were only paid in relation to 'room leaders' (i.e. lead educators) in the ECCE programme. Following the introduction of Core Funding, in line with the commitment in Nurturing Skills, the exclusive link between graduate / higher capitation payments and the ECCE programme has now been removed. The graduate payment is now made in relation to lead educators working with pre-school children of any age from birth to 6, as well as in relation to graduate managers of ELC settings.

Significant work has also taken place during 2022 on the development of a mechanism for the funding of Early Years Educators and SAC Practitioners to upskill their qualification in the field of ELC courses approved by Quality and Qualification Ireland (QQI) and the Qualifications Advisory Board (QAB). Consultation has taken place with representative bodies of Further and Higher Education institutions, and proposals for a funding scheme formed part of Ireland's European Social Fund (ESF+) proposal for 2021-2027, which was approved by the European Commission in October 2022.

The existing Learner Fund continued to operate in 2022 with a total of 473 bursaries issued, 469 to ELC graduates and 4 to Childminding graduates. This is up by 40% for ELC graduates on 2021. The current Learner Fund scheme will continue in 2023 to provide a bursary to those staff who have already completed relevant qualifications. Eligibility criteria for the scheme will remain the same for 2023 with staff having to be employed in the sector before and after they have completed their course and being required to have graduated with a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 7/8/9 on the National Framework of Qualifications. Access to the Learner Fund is also available to childminders graduating with Level 6 qualification in Early Childhood Care and Education.

While there is much overlap between ELC and SAC in the skills and knowledge needed by staff, and many staff work in both ELC and SAC, the distinctive features of SAC, especially in supporting children at the older end of the age-range, mean that an ELC qualification alone will not prepare a SAC practitioner fully to provide SAC. It is for this reason that Nurturing Skills commits to developing a qualification in SAC at Level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

In 2022, DCEDIY and QQI commenced initial planning for the development of a new Level 5 award in SAC based on work carried out by the SAC working group during Phase 2 of development of Nurturing Skills. It is expected that more detailed work on planning for the new qualification will commence in early 2023.

This project will include the development of a special purpose award for SAC for those who already hold a recognised ELC qualification. There will also be an SAC advisory group established to support the development of training and qualifications in SAC and the incremental introduction of minimum Level 5 in SAC Regulations.

Commitments in Nurturing Skills on training and qualifications for childminders reflect the distinctive features of childminding and differences in its stage of development, and are reflected also in the National Action Plan for Childminding 2021-2028, which was published in April 2021.

In line with the National Action Plan for Childminding 2021-2028, and under the oversight of its Steering Group, detailed work was undertaken in 2022 on the development of a foundation training programme, which will service as a pre-registration requirement for childminders. Further development of the foundation training will take place in early 2023, with a view to rolling out the training later in 2023.

Nurturing Skills commits to support the development of initial professional education programmes or modules (at Levels 5 through to 8) that are conducted through the medium of Irish.

Through supports provided by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, the University of Galway has begun a process of planning for the development of Irish-language modules for degree programmes for Early Years Educators.

During 2022, QQI and the Qualifications Advisory Board (QAB) continued their work of supporting the introduction of new award standards for qualifications in ELC at Levels 5 to 8 on the NFQ, in line with the annotated Professional Award Type Descriptors (PATD) and the Professional Award Criteria and Guidelines (PACG), both published in 2019. Roll out of new programmes at Levels 5 and 6 commenced through the Education and Training Boards in autumn 2021, and old award standards at level 5 and 6 will be deactivated by QQI in late 2023. At Levels 7 and 8, any new entrants onto degree programmes from September 2022 must be on a QAB-approved degree programme if their qualification is to be recognised in future DCEDIY funding schemes.

To ensure full adherence to these new qualification standards, during 2022 DCEDIY commenced a review of the process for recognition of qualifications for individuals who do not have approved awards but who have equivalent qualifications, e.g. Early Years Educators with qualifications from outside Ireland. This review is intended to update the qualification recognition standards in line with the PATD and PACG.

4.3 Pillar 3: Developing a national Continuing Professional Development (CPD) system

Continuing professional development (CPD) for Early Years Educators, SAC Practitioners and childminders who are already qualified and working in the sector is a key factor in ensuring the quality of ELC and SAC provision.

To date delivery of CPD opportunities has been fragmented, with some coordination being achieved through the National Síolta Aistear Initiative since 2016 and through Better Start's Learning and Development (L&D) Unit, which was established in 2018/19. During 2022, Better Start has further developed the capacity of its learner management system (LMS) which, in line with the commitment in Nurturing Skills, is intended to provide a central, online hub for quality-assured CPD activities and resources, as the basis for a single national "gateway" for CPD for the sector.

In addition to the existing training already available on Better Start's LMS (which is mainly training programmes related to AIM, the Access and Inclusion Model), one of the first new additions to the CPD catalogue on the LMS will be an online introduction to Síolta and Aistear, which is currently under development as part of the National Síolta Aistear Initiative (NSAI), in line with the commitment in Nurturing Skills to redevelop NSAI resources into a new blended format, combining online and face-to-face delivery.

In 2022 the Department has worked closely with Gaeloideachas to develop a 12 week CPD course through Irish for those in the sector who work through Irish, expected for roll-out in 2023.

Through collaboration between Léargas, DCEDIY and Better Start, a new professional development opportunity for the workforce has arisen from the decision made in 2022 to open exchange opportunities funded through the EU Erasmus+ programme to Early Years Educators who are working in ELC services that are Core Funding Partner Services. It is expected that application processes for Erasmus+ exchanges will open to ELC settings from early 2023.

4.4 Pillar 4: Supporting recruitment, retention and diversity

The primary factor affecting recruitment and retention for ELC and SAC services is the level of pay and working conditions. As the State is not the employer in ELC or SAC and so does not determine wages or working conditions, Nurturing Skills describes improvement in pay and conditions as a "key enabler" rather than a direct action under the plan, and the issue is further discussed in section 3.6 below.

In September 2022, as part of Budget 2023, Minister O’Gorman announced his intention to remove the current three-year experience requirement to avail of the graduate premium in Core Funding, with the intention of further supporting the recruitment and retention in the sector of recent graduates. Although this change will need to be recommended by the Joint Labour Committee and included in a revised Employment Regulation Order to take effect, the Minister has stated his willingness to support such a change through additional funding in Core Funding from September 2023. The removal of the three-year experience requirement will put lead educators in a comparable position to other professional graduate roles in other sectors.

4.5 Pillar 5. Moving towards regulation of the profession

First 5 commits to moving incrementally over time towards regulation of the ELC and SAC profession, building on the establishment in 2020 of the Qualifications Advisory Board and future creation of a register of the workforce. Nurturing Skills restates this commitment to an incremental move to regulation of the profession over the lifetime of Nurturing Skills. No date is set for completion of this process, given the importance of ensuring that all elements of regulation are robust, ensuring that the sector is ready, and avoiding additional administrative burden on Early Years Educators / SAC practitioners at this time.

As part of the process of moving towards regulation of the profession, the processes currently under way through QQI and the Qualifications Advisory Board to assess adherence of qualifications to the new professional award criteria at Levels 5-8 on the NFQ will continue, and a new professional award in SAC will be developed. Developments during 2022 in the work of QQI and QAB on ELC qualifications are summarised under Pillar 2 above.

4.6 Key Enablers

Successful delivery of the commitments in Nurturing Skills relies on key enablers that lie outside the scope of the Plan but will be shaped by parallel reform processes currently under way, in particular improvement in levels of pay and conditions of employment, which relies on the progress of the Joint Labour Committee for Early Years Services. However, a central factor in the success of the Joint Labour Committee process in 2022 was the introduction of a new Core Funding stream for ELC and SAC services from September 2022.

The Joint Labour Committee (JLC) was established in 2021 and its work intensified in 2022. DCEDIY provided support and briefing to the members of the JLC as required, including provision of data on current rates of pay in the sector and information on Core Funding. The work of the JLC culminated in the submission of two draft Employment Regulation Orders (EROs) to the Labour Court in mid-2022. The Minister of State for Enterprise, Trade and Employment accepted the recommendations of the Labour Court, and the two EROs came into force on 15 September 2022.

It is estimated that the EROs improved the wages of 73% of workers in the sector, with the wages of 50% of employees in the sector estimated to have risen by 10% or more, and the wages of 20% of employees estimated to have risen by 20% or more. In addition, with higher minimum rates of pay for different roles (Lead Educators and Managers) and those with graduate qualifications, the EROs also helped to establish a wage structure associated with the career framework set out in Nurturing Skills.

The EROs are being supported by Core Funding— which has an allocation of €259 million in its first year – to support improvements in staff wages, alongside a commitment to freeze parental fees and support the sustainability of services.

Building on this initial step of improving pay and condition in the services, in Budget 2023 it was announced that the Core Funding allocation was increased by €28 million for year 2 of the new scheme.

The Minister has already signalled that €4 million of that allocation will support the removal of the 3-year experience rule for graduate premiums, with the allocation of the remaining €24 million to be informed by the emerging data from Year 1 of operation.

5. Progress in relation to the 2022 to 2024 Implementation Plan

There are 57 actions set out in the 2022-2024 Implementation Plan. The table below reports on progress in relation to those actions that were to be progressed during 2022.

Action	Description	Key Responsibility	Supporting Organisations	Key Milestone	Action update Status	Action progress comment
1	Link future funding to awards that are in line with the Professional Award Type Descriptors (PATD) and Professional Award Criteria and Guidelines (PACG). Holders of prior awards will continue to be recognised for the purpose of funding.	DCEDIY	QAB, QQI	2022	In Progress	Graduate premiums in Core Funding aligned with timeline for introduction of PATD and PACG aligned awards. New funding under development with a view to introducing funding for those in the workforce to upskill/gain further qualifications. Funding will be provided for recognised awards only.
2	Continue to monitor progress towards achieving the target of a graduate-led ELC workforce by 2028, and consider alternative measures that may be needed to help ensure the target is met.	DCEDIY	DFHERIS	2022-24	In Progress	Qualification level of workforce continues to be monitored through Sector Profile and Core Funding administrative data which, will be reviewed to see impact of other NS actions.
7	Develop and introduce a mechanism for the funding of Early Years Educators with a Level 5 award to undertake a Level 6 award in line with the PATD.	DCEDIY	DE, FE & HE sector, Pobal	2022	In Progress	New funding under development with a view to introducing funding for those in the workforce to upskill/gain further qualifications
8	Develop and introduce a mechanism for the funding of Early Years Educators to undertake Level 7/8 programmes in ELC that are in line with the PACG.	DCEDIY	DE, FE & HE sector, Pobal	2022	In Progress	New funding under development with a view to introducing funding for those in the workforce to upskill/gain further qualifications
9	Develop and introduce a mechanism for providing financial support to ELC and SAC services to help meet the costs of releasing	DCEDIY	DE, FE & HE sector, Pobal	2022	In Progress	New funding under development with a view to including

	staff to go on student practice placements and study leave.					payment to services for student placements.
10	Reform service funding to remove the exclusive link between higher capitation payments and the ECCE programme. As part of Core Funding, the Higher Capitation payments will be replaced by new financial supports for service providers to employ graduates as Lead Educators and managers with all ages of children in ELC. In order to support upskilling and the achievement of the graduate qualification target, these supports will focus on the employment of graduates with relevant degrees.	DCEDIY	Pobal	2022	Complete	Core Funding and supporting ERO commenced on 15 September 2022. Graduate Lead Educator role and graduate premium payment in place for working with children of all ages 0-6.
11	Continue the work of Qualifications Advisory Board to assess, design and monitor implementation of ELC degree programmes in line with the PACG.	DE, DCEDIY		2022-24	In Progress	The QAB has currently approved 38 courses in 28 locations in 18 HEIs as meeting the requirement of the PACG. The second phase of this process, which will review the implementation of these courses in practice, is due to commence in 2023, and the detailed planning for this phase is currently underway.
12	Amend the qualifications recognition process to bring it in line with the PATD and PACG.	DCEDIY, DE		2022	In Progress	DCEDIY reviewing process for recognition of qualifications with a view to bringing it line with PATD and PACG standards. Research on approaches in other jurisdictions and other sectors to be undertaken in 2023.
13	Support the development of initial professional education programmes or modules that are conducted through the medium of Irish for Early Years Educators working in naíonraí within and outside the Gaeltacht.	DTCAGSM, DE, DCEDIY		2021-24	In Progress	This is an action that has been identified and comes in under the 5 year Irish Language Action Plan 2018-2022. Planning under way for development of Irish-language modules in

						University of Galway degree programme
14	Develop and roll out an open-access, online introductory training programme on SAC, focused on raising awareness of the content of the National Quality Guidelines for SAC that were published in 2020.	DCEDIY	DCEDIY	2022	In Progress	Work has commenced to establish an SAC Qualifications and Training group with a view to developing the training in 2023
15	Finalise the development of Professional Award-Type Descriptors for a Level 5 qualification in SAC.	DCEDIY	QQI	2022	In Progress	Discussion on development of SAC Level 5 commenced. Dedicated resource to support project to be agreed. Funding for dedicated resource confirmed in Budget 2023. Work to commence in early 2023
16	Develop a short special purpose SAC award to meet the minimum Level 5 requirement to practise in SAC for practitioners with qualifications in related disciplines, including ELC.	DCEDIY	QQI	2022	In Progress	To be addressed as part of development of Level 5 SAC programme
19	Incorporate the incremental introduction of a Level 5 minimum qualification requirement into comprehensive Regulations to be introduced for SAC.	DCEDIY		2022	Not Started	The development of comprehensive SAC regulations will commence later in this phase of NS.
20	Develop and introduce a mechanism for the funding of SAC practitioners to undertake a Level 5 SAC award and a special purpose course that meet the Level 5 requirement.	DCEDIY	DE, FE & HE sector, Pobal	2022	In Progress	Funding for Level 5 SAC can be included in new funding when programme is developed
21	Support the development of initial professional education programmes or modules for SAC that are conducted through the medium of Irish.	DCEDIY, DTCAGSM		2022-24	Not Started	Pending the development of an SAC award.
22	Within the framework of the National Action Plan for Childminding 2021-2028 (NAPC), develop and commence roll-out of a funded childminder-specific Foundation Training Programme	DCEDIY		2022-23	In Progress	Outlines of modules developed. Full training programme to be developed in 2023.

	as a pre-requirement for registration with Tusla.					
23	Within the framework of the NAPC, develop a Quality Development Programme for registered childminders.	DCEDIY		2022-23	Not Started	Will progress in 2023, building on the foundation training programme.
24	Develop and implement new childminder-specific Regulations that include training requirements in line with the NAPC.	DCEDIY		2022-23	In Progress	Development of regulations commenced in mid-2022 and will continue in 2023
25	Within the framework of the NAPC, research and pilot the introduction of staffed local childminding networks, to inform the development of a new role of local childminding network leader.	DCEDIY		2022-24	In Progress	Piloting in development. Independent research partner to be appointed.
26	Develop a robust process for recognition of prior qualifications and learning for the Foundation Training and Quality Development Programme.	DCEDIY		2022-23	In Progress	Being examined as part of development of the Foundation Training and Quality Development Programme
27	Building on the outcome of the Review of the Operating Model, ensure that the further development of the operating model to support the ELC and SAC sector provides a firm basis for development of a single national structure to oversee the development of CPD resources and supports.	DCEDIY		2022-23	Not Started	
28	Progress the development of a learner management system to provide a central hub to access quality-assured ELC and SAC CPD activities and resources.	DCEDIY		2022-23	In Progress	A learner management system (LMS) has been developed by Better Start, which will serve as a hub/gateway for CPD. Further development of the LMS is under way.
29	Commission the development of an online system to enable the recording, tracking and viewing of CPD engagement at ELC and SAC	DCEDIY		2022-23	In Progress	Updates to the Better Start LMS are in development stage. This will facilitate the ability of educators and

	service level and at individual professional level.					practitioners to track their own CPD progress, as an initial step prior to development of a dedicated online portal.
30	Develop a single, modular, blended training programme to support the roll-out of Síolta and Aistear, with roll-out accelerated to achieve full national coverage, and structured linkages between the training programme and mentoring supports provided by Better Start QDS.	DE, DCEDIY, Better Start		2022	In Progress	The contract for e-learning development was awarded in Q4 with initial work on moving courses online to take place in 2023.
31	Establish a working group to oversee the updating of Síolta and the development of a single, national self-evaluation framework, building on the self-assessment tools already developed through the Aistear-Síolta Practice Guide and other resources, and integrated with other established national frameworks e.g. Aistear, the Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Charter and Guidelines, and the National Quality Guidelines for SAC Services.	DCEDIY, DE		2022	Not Started	This actions is due to commence in 2023.
35	Develop guidance on participation in CPD activities (formal, non-formal and informal), including definitions and examples of good practice.	DCEDIY		2022-23	Not Started	
36	Introduce Core Funding from September 2022 to provide financial support for non-contact time, including participation in a diverse range of CPD activities, replacing the more limited CPD payment pilot.	DCEDIY	Pobal	2022	Complete	Core Funding commenced 15 September 2022.
37	Develop national guidance and resources to support student professional practice placement, at all qualification levels.	DE, DCEDIY	FE & HE sector, QQI, QAB	2022	Not Started	

38	As a next step, in relation to e-learning, make CPD materials, resources and supports available in both Irish and English.	DCEDIY, DE, Better Start		2022-24	In Progress	The contract for e-learning development was awarded in Q4, with a requirement that courses are made available in both Irish and English.
39	Conduct a mapping of existing CPD supports as an initial step to inform further actions, along with a survey of ELC and SAC professionals' and services' engagement in CPD.	DCEDIY	Better Start, CCCs	2022	Not Started	This action is due to commence in 2023
40	Develop a central hub or a one-stop-shop approach on careers and training opportunities in ELC and SAC, building on existing resources, with information made available for a variety of stakeholders including careers/guidance counsellors.	DCEDIY		2022-23	Not Started	
41	Undertake a campaign to promote careers in ELC and SAC, focusing initially on the value and importance to children and society of high quality ELC and SAC provision. Promotional materials should give visibility to the diversity of people who work in the sector and what they do.	DCEDIY		2022-24	Not Started	
43	Review and further roll out Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training across the ELC and SAC sector, facilitated by developing an online format for the training.	DCEDIY, CCCs		2022	In Progress	EDI continues to be rolled out through the AIM. EDI training recommenced in July 2022, following a pause during Covid. Course to be re-designed and tender document for advice on this is being prepared.
44	Examine development of a range of entry routes into the sector, including apprenticeships or other work-based learning, and access programmes in FE and HE.	DCEDIY, DFHERIS	FE & HE sector, QQI, QAB	2022-23	Not Started	
45	In considering different entry routes into the sector, examine the scope for targeting potential Early Years Educators and SAC Practitioners from groups that are	DCEDIY		2022-24	Not Started	

	less well represented in the workforce.					
46	Ensure the approach to careers information has a particular focus on information and supports for potential entrants to the workforce from minority groups and men, as well as Irish-language opportunities (including for those for whom Irish is not their first language).	DCEDIY		2022-23	Not Started	
48	Continue the processes currently under way through QQI and the Qualifications Advisory Board to oversee, assess and monitor adherence of qualifications to the new professional award criteria at Levels 5-8 on the NFQ.	DE, DCEDIY, QQI		2022-24	In Progress	The QAB has currently approved 38 courses in 28 locations in 18 HEIs as meeting the requirement of the PACG. The second phase of this process, which will review the implementation of these courses in practice, is due to commence in 2023, and the detailed planning for this phase is currently underway. QQI assessing adherence of level 5 and 6 awards to PATD.
49	Establish a language competency working group to advise on a regulatory requirement for language-proficiency.	DCEDIY		2022-23	Not Started	
50	Carry out research on language proficiency across the ELC and SAC sector to help determine the timeframe for introduction of a language-proficiency requirement.	DCEDIY		2022-23	In Progress	Questions have been included on language proficiency (English and Irish) in the TALIS Starting Strong survey, which will be piloted in spring 2023.
51	Establishment and on-going operation of a Joint Labour Committee for the ELC and SAC sector.	Labour Court	DETE	2021-22	Complete	JLC established and has agreed two EROs. The JLC remains in place.
52	Develop appropriate funding mechanisms to support ELC and SAC services to meet additional costs arising from an Employment Regulation Order that may come	DCEDIY		2022-24	In Progress	Core Funding and supporting ERO commenced on 15 September 2022. As Core Funding will

	into force as well as to introduce or improve other factors that contribute to high-quality practice, such as non-contact time, planning, training, and curriculum implementation.					continue to develop, the action remains 'in progress'
53	Strengthen the capacity of the infrastructure for delivery of quality supports, including the development of a national infrastructure for CPD supports.	DCEDIY		2022-24	In Progress	Work has started with Pobal to help build the ICT infrastructure, through further development of the Better Start LMS which will be supported by a recently procured eLearning design specialists.
54	Develop a stakeholder engagement and communications plan to ensure the contents of the Workforce Plan are widely understood across the sector (including development of a website dedicated to the Workforce Plan) and to support ongoing direct engagement with the ELC and SAC workforce.	DCEDIY	CCCs	2022	In Progress	Initial steps in scoping communication strategy for Nurturing Skills in progress.
55	Should a professional association for Early Years Educators and SAC Practitioners be established with sufficient organisational scale to carry out the core functions expected of a professional association, seek appropriate opportunities for engagement and consultation with it.	DCEDIY		2022-24	Not Started	No association yet in place that meets the criteria.
56	Develop a core indicator set for monitoring progress of implementation.	Monitoring Committee	DCEDIY	2022	Complete	Initial indicator set agreed and to be kept under review.
57	Participate in the pilot and 2024 round of the OECD TALIS Starting Strong survey.	DCEDIY	Pobal, CCCs	2022-24	In Progress	Ireland due to participate in next TALIS survey. Feedback provided to OECD on country specific questions. Pilot to take place in Spring 2023

6. Key indicators

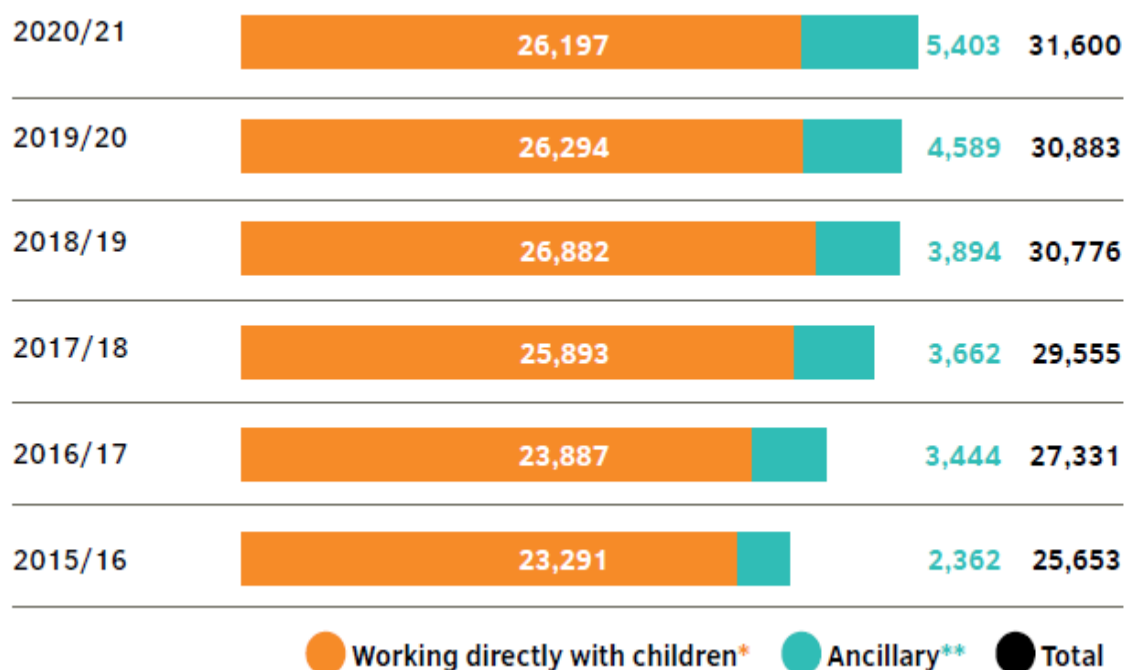
Nurturing Skills Key Indicators - 2022

Nurturing Skills Key indicators	Pillar	Indicator No.	2028 Target	2019	2020	2021
Staff with Level 6 and above	Pillar 1	1.1	85%	66.8%	68.8%	70.1%
Lead Educators with Level 7 and above	Pillar 1	1.2	100%	38.5%	39.3%	42.6%
Managers with Level 6 and above	Pillar 1	1.3	100%	91.0%	92.0%	96.6%
SAC practitioners with a Level 5 in SAC	Pillar 1	1.4	50%	N/A ¹	N/A	N/A
Childminders with foundation level Training	Pillar 1	1.5		N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of staff availing of new funding for upskilling	Pillar 2	2.1		N/A	N/A	N/A
Number of Staff availing of current Learner Fund	Pillar 2	2.2		420	400	336
Number of Staff completing CPD through the national CPD gateway	Pillar 3	3.1		N/A	N/A	N/A
Measurement of NSAI roll out	Pillar 3	3.2		N/A	N/A	N/A
Service staff turnover	Pillar 4	4.1		23%	18%	19%
Staff exiting the sector	Pillar 4	4.2				13%
Services reporting recruitment challenges	Pillar 4	4.3		53%	44%	49%
Gender balance in the sector (%F:%M)	Pillar 4	4.4		N/A	N/A	98:2
Equality Diversity and Inclusion training (services)	Pillar 4	4.5		3,373	3,394	3,394
English and Irish language proficiency in services	Pillar 5	5.1		N/A	N/A	N/A

Other Contextual indicators

Total number of staff working in ELC/SAC services

¹ Data which currently is not collected or is not available to the Department has been recorded as N/A in the table above.



Number of staff in ELC/SAC services	6.1	30,776	30,883	31,600
Number of registered childminders	6.2	N/A	84	84
Managers with a Level 7 and above, qualification	6.3	43%	45%	75%
Proportion of ELC staff with Level 7 and above	6.4	25%	27%	34%