

Pathway to a quality support and assurance system for childminding

Volume 1:

Summary report of the Working Group on
reforms and supports for the childminding sector

January 2018

© 2018. The Working Group on Reforms and Supports for the Childminding Sector

c/o Childminding Ireland
First Floor
39 Wexford Road
Arklow
Co Wicklow

This report is accompanied by *Pathway to a Quality Support and Assurance System for Childminding: Supporting Documents*, which brings together some of the key works that the Working Group drew on in drafting the report.

From the Minister

I would like to take this opportunity to thank and commend the members of the Childminding Working Group for their intensive, comprehensive and collaborative work to produce the *Report on Reforms and Supports for the Childminding Sector*.

Improving access to high quality and affordable childcare has been a key priority of mine since I became Minister. The childminding sector plays an extremely important role with many children and families in Ireland today and it has done so for many decades. A significant proportion of parents, for whom relative care is not an option, choose childminding services over more formal forms of childcare. They do this for a variety of reasons including the needs of their individual children and their family circumstances. It is important that the State acknowledges this and supports children and families to continue to access high quality childminding services. It is also important that initiatives the State is introducing to make childcare more affordable extend to all quality assured providers.

I established this Working Group because I wanted my Department to be advised by experts on the various issues that needed consideration as we develop childminding further in this country. The Group's advice on the possible steps that might be taken to support childminders, to ensure high quality services to children, and to offer families using these services whatever financial supports may be available to users of formal childcare services, is invaluable.

This report gives my Department information and analysis which I have no doubt will greatly influence policy over the coming years. Major strides have been made with centre-based childcare over the past decade in Ireland. I hope that this report now marks a significant milestone for childminders and the many children and families currently availing of their services and those who will benefit from their services in the future.

Dr Katherine Zappone
Minister for Children and Youth Affairs

From the Chairperson

I would like to begin by thanking Dr Katherine Zappone, Minister for Children and Youth Affairs for having the foresight to establish the Working Group on Supports and Reforms for the Childminder sector (Working Group). It is the first time in Ireland that such a group has been formed, and the Working Group has provided a platform to address the issues facing the childminding sector, a sector that has until now been largely ignored and unsupported.

I would also like to thank my colleagues on the Working Group for all their hard work and commitment. The Working Group kept the best interests of children in mind at all times and used consultation, and national and international research to inform the process. The *Report of the Working Group* represents a very significant step in proposed inclusion, support and quality assurance for childminding in Ireland.

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs will now review the proposals for adoption and create an Action Plan for implementation. The future challenge is to ensure that the implementation of adopted proposals builds on the unique strengths of childminding including close relationships, continuity of care and home-from-home provision in the local community.

What's in the report

- ▶ **Chapter 1: Introduction** is a brief introduction to how we as a working group set about our work. It includes the terms of reference under which we were established by the DCYA, details of the approaches we took to ensure that we could capture the voices of children, parents and childminders, and arrive at workable proposals for reform. Our main proposals are summarised here.
- ▶ **Chapter 2: Childminding: the policy context** looks at what we can learn from other countries about childminding, and also reviews how policies in Ireland have changed over the last fifteen years or so.
- ▶ **Chapter 3: Overview of the childminding sector in Ireland** presents statistics about the size and scale of the childminding sector in Ireland.
- ▶ **Chapter 4: Definitions of childminding** looks at past and current definitions of childminding, and proposes a new definition that is more in line with practice on the ground. It also makes a number of proposals for legislative change in this area.
- ▶ **Chapter 5: Registration, regulation and inspection** looks at the international experience of regulation in childminding and also at current policy in Ireland. It sets out a number of options that Ireland could follow in moving towards regulation.
- ▶ **Chapter 6: Quality standards and supports** looks at how we can determine what is quality in childminding, and also the factors, such as education and the availability of childminding networks, that can help to improve it. The options in these areas are looked at in some detail.
- ▶ **Chapter 7: Funding and financial supports** reviews some of the current financial supports that are available to childminders.
- ▶ **Chapter 8: Strategy and implementation** makes the point that there is currently no specific development or implementation infrastructure for childminding. It proposes a number of measures to coordinate and streamline the implementation of childminding policy in Ireland.

Bernadette Orbinksi Burke
Chairperson, Working Group

Acronyms and abbreviations

ACF	Always Children First
ACS	Affordable Childcare Scheme
AIM	Access and Inclusion Model
BOBF	Better Outcomes Brighter Futures
CCC	County Childcare Committees
CCI	Childcare Committee Ireland
CCS	Community Childcare Schemes
CMAO	Childminder Advisory Officer
CMDG	Childminding Development Grant
CMI	Childminding Ireland
CoRe	Competence Requirements in Early Childhood Education and Care
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DCYA	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
DES	Department of Education and Skills
DSP	Department of Social Protection
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
EOCP	Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme
ETB	Education and Training Board
EYEI	Early Years Education-focused Inspections
GUI	Growing Up in Ireland
HSE	Health Service Executive
IDG	International Data Group
NCIP	National Childcare Investment Programme
NCMI	National Childminding Initiative
NVCC	National Voluntary Childcare Collaborative
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PRSI	Pay Related Social Insurance
QAP	Quality Awareness Programme for Childminders
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
SAC	School Age Childcare
TEC	Training and Employment Childcare

Contents

1 Introduction.....	8
About the Working Group	8
Terms of reference.....	9
The Working Group’s approach	9
Summary of proposals	11
2 Childminding: the policy context.....	14
International learning on childminding	14
Previous national childminding policy in Ireland: 2002–2010.....	15
Current policy on childminding.....	16
3 Overview of the childminding sector in Ireland	19
Different categories of home-based childcare	19
4 Definitions of ‘childminding’	21
Some current definitions of ‘childminding’	21
The need for a new, agreed definition of ‘childminding’	21
Proposed definition of ‘childminder’ and ‘childminding service’	22
Proposals: Legislation.....	24
5 Registration, regulation and inspection.....	25
International learning on childminding regulation	25
Current policy on the regulation of childminding.....	25
Options for moving to registration	26
Proposals: regulation, registration and inspection.....	27
6 Quality standards and supports	30
Key policy areas and the dimensions of quality.....	30
International learning on childminding quality	30
Current policy on childminding quality.....	31
Education standards for childminders: the options.....	33
Divergent views on future mandatory education requirements.....	34
Development of childminding networks	34
Proposals: quality standards and supports.....	35
7 Funding and financial supports	36
Current policy for children and parents using childminding	36
Current policy for childminders	36

Proposals: funding and financial supports.....	37
8 Strategy and implementation	38
Current policy.....	38
Options Discussed	38
Proposals: strategy and implementation.....	38
 Appendices	
A The Working Group.....	41
B Select bibliography.....	42
C Timeline.....	45
D Overview of supporting documents.....	48

1 Introduction

About the Working Group

Home-based childcare, paid and unpaid, forms the largest subsector in non-parental childcare in Ireland.¹ It is estimated that 10% of children in Ireland from infancy to 12 years of age receive childcare² services from childminders, au pairs or nannies,³ often in combination with other forms of parental and non-parental childcare. This equates to approximately 88,000 children.⁴ This is only an estimate because the vast majority of childminding services are excluded from the statutory regulatory system. Fewer than 120 childminders are registered with Tusla out of a national estimate of 35,000 paid childminders.⁵

The Working Group on Reforms and Supports for the Childminding Sector (the Working Group), was established by Dr Katherine Zappone, Minister of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) in September 2016. The Working Group was asked to consider issues related to childminding and make proposals concerning reforms and supports for the childminding sector in Ireland for the short, medium and long term, including the feasibility of mandatory regulation.

The Chief Executive of Childminding Ireland, the national body for childminders, was invited to chair the Working Group. The Working Group membership was established by the DCYA and comprised of representatives of the following:

- ▶ Childminding Ireland (Chair)
- ▶ Better Start National Early Years Quality Development
- ▶ Children’s Rights Alliance
- ▶ Pobal
- ▶ Academic Representative
- ▶ DCYA Early Years Unit
- ▶ National Voluntary Childcare Organisation Collaborative
- ▶ Tusla, Early Years Inspectorate
- ▶ Childminders’ Representative
- ▶ Childcare Committee Ireland

1 Central Statistics Office, 2017, p.1. The Quarterly National Household Survey Childcare module shows 29% of children under 12 with unpaid/paid relatives and friends, childminders, nannies and au pairs, and 13% in centre-based provision. See McGinnity, Murray, & McNally, 2013 for childcare usage for very young children.

2 Childminders care for a mixed age cohort, covering both Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) and School Age Childcare (SAC), which we will simply refer to as childcare.

3 The Quarterly National Household Survey does not distinguish between a childminder, nanny or au pair.

4 There are 880,2098 children age zero to 12 years, inclusive, in Ireland (Central Statistics Office, Census 2016)

5 This estimate is based on updating the figures in Children 2020, with the population results from the latest Census (2016) and the percentages from the most recent Quarterly National Household Survey Module on Childcare (2017), using the assumption of Goodbody Economic Consultants in 2011 that childminders care for 2.5 children on average.

Terms of reference

The following terms of reference were established by the DCYA and agreed by the Working Group. Using research and consultation as required, drawing on international best practice, and acting at all times in the best interests of children, the Working Group will:

- ▶ Provide a description of the childminding sector in Ireland, including all the different categories of childminders and, where possible, the estimated number in each category.
- ▶ Make recommendations in respect of which categories should be included in plans for reform and support of the sector, and (if necessary) provide a rationale for excluding others.
- ▶ In the short term, identify the reforms and supports that are required to have a robust system of quality assurance for childminders.
- ▶ Make proposals for, and cost* where appropriate, a model of reforms and supports for the childminding sector in the short (1–3 years) term, medium (3–5 years) and long (5–10 years) term.
- ▶ Examine the feasibility* and implications of the migration from voluntary to mandatory regulation for the childminding sector.

*The Working Group wishes to advise that it was not possible to provide costs for the model of reforms and supports proposed, for a variety of reasons, including lack of availability of data, time constraints, and the complexity of modelling so many variables without expert support. The Working Group proposes that DCYA commission a specialist to produce a feasibility study on the proposed reforms.

The Working Group's approach

The Working Group met nine times (including three externally facilitated sessions) from September 2016 to September 2017, chaired by Bernadette Orbinski Burke of Childminding Ireland.

Members of the group, along with external invitees, provided extensive evidence on a range of matters including comparative international perspectives, legislative and regulatory context, qualifications and quality. In particular, the Working Group considered research regarding seven regulated national systems for childminders in Europe presented by Dr Marianne Boogaard and Dr Iris Bollen of the Kohnstamm Institute, Amsterdam University. In addition, the Working Group held a video conference with Maggie Simpson, Chief Executive of the Scottish National Childminding Association, about the experience of regulation for childminders in Scotland.

Capturing the views of children, parents and working childminders

To include the views of children in relation to childminding, the Working Group reviewed material from a consultation that the DCYA undertook with children in relation to the Action Plan on School Age Childcare⁶ in 2017. Also considered was a consultation with parents undertaken on the Working Group's behalf by Childminding Ireland in May 2017, and which captured parents' views and experiences of childminding, with 3,630 responses. The findings included an overwhelmingly positive childminder satisfaction rating, with the majority of respondents (approximately 72%; n=1208) 'very satisfied' with their childminder.

⁶ DCYA, 2017a.

It would appear from the results of the survey that the majority of respondents, place a higher value on continuity of care, a ‘home-from-home’ setting, a safe physical environment and positive references from people they know more than they did on childcare qualification, training, or official inspections. From this it is clear that any effort to effect change in the childminding system will need to take account of a culturally aligned understanding of quality and to ensure that the qualities most highly regarded by parents and guardians are not undervalued.

In addition, the views of working childminders were also ascertained through a survey and a discussion day with members of Childminding Ireland. The principle themes that emerged as matters of great concern to childminders were:

- ▶ Lack of appropriate inspections and regulations
- ▶ Lack of respect for the home-from-home ethos
- ▶ Lack of professional support for childminders
- ▶ Lack of access to education and training
- ▶ Lack of recognition for professional working standards
- ▶ Lack of access to funding, subsidies and financial supports.

Unless addressed, all of these issues have the potential to inhibit the migration of childminding into a quality assured system.

Detailed summaries of children’s views concerning childminding in the Action Plan on School Age Childcare (DCYA, 2017), the parents’ survey and the outcomes of the discussion day with childminders are contained in *Pathway to a Quality Support & Assurance System for Childminding: reference documents*, which is available in parallel with this report.

Placing reform in the context of national policy

The Working Group also recognises the importance of underpinning the reform of the childminding sector within the current national policy and quality frameworks for early years, such as *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures*,⁷ *Síolta: The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education*⁸ and *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*.⁹

Proposed reforms and what they seek to achieve

Having studied and discussed the research and the feedback from the scoping and consultation process, the Working Group makes proposals in the following areas:

- ▶ Legislation
- ▶ Regulation, registration and inspection
- ▶ Quality supports and standards
- ▶ Funding and financial supports
- ▶ Strategy and implementation

The Working Group believes that the implementation of its proposals in these areas will substantially enhance the quality of childminding in Ireland, and that collectively they will help to:

- ▶ Achieve the best possible outcomes for children

⁷ DCYA, 2014.

⁸ Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education, (2006).

⁹ National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), (2009).

- ▶ Safeguard and protect children
- ▶ Provide parents and families with a safe and nurturing environment for their children
- ▶ Build on the unique strengths of childminding, including close relationships, continuity of care and home-from-home provision in the local community
- ▶ Support childminders to provide enjoyable, high quality care, development and learning opportunities for children of all ages.

Summary of proposals

Proposals: Legislation

- 1 Amend the Child Care Act , 1991, S.58 to allow for the inclusion of the following more comprehensive definition of childminding services in the Early Years regulations (2016).
“Childminding service” means a childcare service, which may include an overnight service, offered by a person who single-handedly takes care of children aged from 0-15 years old, which may include the person’s own children, in the person’s home for payment for a total of more than 2 hours per day.
- 2 Amend the extended definition of early years services in the Child and Family Agency Act 2013, S.92, (which amended the Child Care Act, 1991, part VII) in order to include school aged childcare up to age 15, raising the age limit to align with the upper child age threshold for eligibility for the Affordable Childcare Scheme.
- 3 Start the development of the legislative amendment in year one of the strategy as the legislative process can take some time.
- 4 Review the various definitions of childminding services and eligibility criteria underpinning national policy and programmes to ensure consistency and their support for national policy goals for children and families.
- 5 Review how best to support in-home childcare by au pairs and nannies to ensure children’s protection, health and development, and possible parental access to subsidies.

Proposals: regulation, registration and inspection

- 6 Develop the required amendments to the 1991 Child Care Act. The Working Group was aware that the DCYA is reviewing the Child Care Act 1991 over the next three years with a view to reform. There is a case for amending the Act separately from this review and reform process to support childminders’ migration to become regulated providers of childcare.
- 7 Establish an expert group on Registration, Regulation and Inspection that would develop minimum regulatory standards for childminding services for children from birth to 15 years. This expert group could start by developing the minimum regulatory standards¹⁰ required for initial registration, covering, but not necessarily limited, to:
 - ▶ The suitability of the childminder
 - Up-to-date Certification in First Aid for children
 - Two written references
 - Insurance for the childminding service
 - Certification in Always Children First training

¹⁰ Childminding Ireland is currently participating in the consultation process on the draft Quality and Regulatory Framework being developed by Tusla for childminding services under existing Early Years’ regulations (2016).

- Certification in at least the QQI level 5 minor award in childminding, or other recognised qualifications for early years on the DCYA list¹¹
- Copy of the vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the National Vetting Bureau Children & Vulnerable Persons Act, 2012.
- ▶ The suitability of other people in the home
 - A copy of the vetting disclosure for all members of the household aged over 18 received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the National Vetting Bureau Children & Vulnerable Persons Act, 2012.
- ▶ The suitability of the home; the childminder should be required to present:
 - Copy of health and safety risk assessment
 - Copy of a Fire Safety Plan

8 Create a Communications Strategy, to communicate the benefits of registration, to childminders and parents.

Proposals: quality standards and supports

9 Establish an expert group on Quality Standards, Mentoring and Network Development to recommend appropriate quality standards for childminding in line with the Síolta Framework.

10 As part of the national childminding office, create a system of staffed childminding networks, facilitated by childcare professionals with experience in childminding.

11 Once regulatory and quality standards have been agreed, establish an expert group to develop education and professional training for childminders:

- ▶ Redevelop the QQI Level 5 minor award in Childminding, alongside basic training in paediatric first aid and Always Children First.
- ▶ Review other QQI Level 5 components with view to including mixed age childcare and business practice for childminders.
- ▶ Consider educational development for childminders in the longer term: continuous professional development, special purpose awards and major awards at different levels.

12 Provide childminders with access to a learner fund or equivalent so they can achieve further childcare qualifications should they wish to.

13 Introduce a Grandfathering Declaration Clause for those close to retirement from childminding.

Proposals: funding and financial supports

14 Establish a funding and financial support expert group to review the effectiveness and efficiency of the funding and financial supports to childminding services

15 All registered and regulated childminding services should be eligible to apply to deliver the ACS and other government funded schemes

¹¹ <https://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/earlyyears/20171018DCYAEarlyYearsRecognisedQualifications.pdf>

Proposals: strategy and implementation

- 16** Establish a National Childminding Strategy informed by the proposals of this Working Group to coordinate the regulatory and quality support aspects within one coherent framework. The National Childminding Strategy should be included in the National Early Years Strategy
- 17** Establish the following expert groups to further develop the pathway to quality supports and assurance for childminding:
 - ▶ Minimum standards, registration, regulation and inspection
 - ▶ Quality standards, mentoring and network development
 - ▶ Education and professional development
 - ▶ Communication strategy
 - ▶ Funding and financial supports
 - ▶ Monitoring and review of strategy implementation.
- 18** Establish an appropriately resourced National Childminding Office to ensure the delivery of the National Childminding Strategy. Suggested functions of the Office would be:
 - ▶ Developing, in partnership with the DCYA and relevant stakeholders, an implementation plan for the National Childminding Strategy, and annual work plans
 - ▶ Managing the regional and local support staffed networks for childminding services
 - ▶ Providing strategic operational direction
 - ▶ Monitoring and adjusting the implementation of the National Childminding Strategy
 - ▶ Implementing a national childminding communications strategy.
- 19** Commission a specialist to produce a feasibility study on the proposed reforms for a childminding regulatory and support system.
- 20** Support the development of a model for estimating and planning for the supply and demand of childminding services within the context of the wider ECEC and SAC sectors.

2 Childminding: the policy context

International learning on childminding

Childminding is a distinctively different form of childcare, and this is something that has not always been adequately recognised. As one commentator has said:

‘Family day care differs from both families and centres along enough dimensions to treat it as a separate ecological system’.¹²

Evidence from other countries shows that jurisdictions with a distinctive system for regulating and supporting childminders have a thriving, growing childminding sector¹³. France and Denmark are considered examples of best practice¹⁴ in the way they ensure good working conditions, mandatory training and networking supports for childminding. In both France and Belgium, childminding is the primary type of childcare for children under 3.¹⁵

Childminding provides a pedagogical approach to children’s developmental and educational outcomes that is distinct from any other type of childcare setting.¹⁶ Childminders typically work with small groups¹⁷ of children of mixed ages,¹⁸ from babies to teens. They develop close relationships¹⁹ with the children by giving them individual attention, and consistency and continuity of care, and they also work in close partnership with the children’s parents.²⁰ And because they work in a home setting, with opportunities for daily outings,²¹ childminders also develop close connections with schools and pre-schools, and with families in the community.²²

Childminders also enter childcare differently. They are generally older when they start childminding, bringing other qualifications and work–life experience to the job.²³ They typically start as mothers who want to stay home with their own children and earn a supplementary income. Some then make it a long-term career, especially when they are well supported.²⁴ Research shows that quality childminding thrives within well supported regulatory systems that make childminding an attractive career option.²⁵

¹² Quality in Family Child Care and Relative Care, Kontos, Howes, Shinn, & Galinsky, 1995.

¹³ In France, the childminding workforce has nearly doubled from over 166,700 in 1995 (Algava & Ruault, 2003) to 327,775 in 2016 (Observatoire National de la Petite Enfance, 2016). By contrast, the number of registered childminders in England has declined from 103,000 in 1996 down to 43,500 in 2017 (Ofsted, 2017), due to reduced networks, and burdensome paperwork, leading to rising numbers of informal childminders (Bryson, Brewer, Sibieta, & Butt, 2012) and calls for reduced regulation (Simon, Owen & Hollingsworth, 2015; Ofsted, 2017).

¹⁴ Letablier & Fagnani, 2009; Halling-Illum & Breuer, 2009.

¹⁵ Competence Requirements in Early Childhood Education and Care (CoRe), 2011, p.14.

¹⁶ Ang, Brooker & Stephen, 2016, A Review of the Research on Childminding: Understanding Children’s Experiences in Home-Based Childcare Settings.

¹⁷ Small group size has been found to linked to quality in interactions (Laevers, Buyse, Daems, & Declercq, 2016).

¹⁸ Lanigan, 2011.

¹⁹ In Ireland, our survey shows that parents particularly value this close relationship between child and childminder. See Appendix on Parents’ Survey.

²⁰ In Belgium, a study on quality found parents rated this highly. Laevers, Buyse, Daems, & Declercq, 2016.

²¹ Fauth, Jellicic, Leo, Wilmott, & Owen, 2011.

²² Ang, Brooker & Stephen, 2016.

²³ Burchinal, Howes, & Kontos, 2002; Kontos, 1994, Kontos, Howes, Shinn, & Galinsky, 1995.

²⁴ Fauth, Jellicic, Leo, Wilmott, & Owen, 2011; Tonyan & Nuttall, 2014.

²⁵ Tonyan & Nuttall, 2014

In Ireland, we can learn from the experience of other countries that any new system of quality support and assurance for childminding will need to respect the distinctive characteristics of childminding. For additional information on international learning on childminding, see *Pathway to a Quality Support & Assurance System for Childminding: reference documents*, which is available in parallel with this report.

Previous national childminding policy in Ireland: 2002–2010

In 2002, the National Childminding Initiative (NCMI) was launched, under the National Childcare Strategy, with the intention of establishing a register of all the different strands of childcare and early education services in Ireland, including childminders. This was done as part of the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme (EOCP) 2000–2006 and the National Childcare Investment Programme (NCIP) 2006–2010, and the NCMI was the first real national policy focus on the childminding sector in Ireland.

The aim of the NCMI was to provide supports for childminders (HSE notified/voluntary notified childminders) and prospective childminders. From 2002 to 2010, Childminder Advisory Officers (CMAOs) were appointed either by the Health Service Executive (the national childcare regulator at the time) or the City and County Childcare Committees (CCCs) to administer the programme, which also involved funding and support for Childminding Ireland as the National Association for Childminders.

The NCMI was made up of a number of elements that included:

- ▶ National Guidelines for Childminders: these were nationally agreed guidelines for good childminding practice regarding the suitability of the childminder, the wellbeing of children, the physical environment, and health & safety.²⁶
- ▶ A Childminding Development Grant (CMDG): this was a small capital grant (€1,000) aimed at improving the safety of the environment and quality of the resources at the childminder's home.
- ▶ A Quality Awareness Programme (QAP): this was a 10-hour training course for childminders, which aimed to promote quality standards and practices among childminders.
- ▶ Voluntary Notification of childminders to the Health Service Executive/Childcare Committees through Childminder Advisory Officers (CMAO), who could provide advisory visits to the home.
- ▶ Information, training and networking opportunities for childminders organised by CMAOs.

Despite all of these positive initiatives under the NCMI, the development of a comprehensive childminding system was not prioritised: out of annual budget for early years of approximately €100 million under EOCP (2000–2006) and NCIP (2006–2011),²⁷ less than 3% was spent to support quality initiatives for childminders. From 2010, funding for childminding was progressively reduced due to budget constraints.

Learning from the National Childminding Initiative (NCMI)

No national evaluation of the implementation and impact of the NCMI was ever conducted. However, there has been an evaluation of the NCMI's impact in Waterford City and County,²⁸ and this has identified some significant strengths in this first national initiative, including the support that CMAO provided to individual childminders. This support helped childminders to network with their

²⁶ DCYA, 2008

²⁷ Value for Money Review of the Equal of Opportunities Report Childcare Programme, Fitzpatrick Associates, 2007

²⁸ An Evaluation of the Impact of the National Childminding Initiative in Waterford, (Daly, 2010)

peers and reduce their isolation. It also promoted greater professionalism and enhanced quality in the sector, particularly through specific training for childminders. In addition, 6,500 childminders completed the Childminding QAP, and parents could access a list of these local childminders.

However, because there was no obligation on childminders to engage (via registration and regulations), the NCMI did not have the desired reach nationally. In addition, the absence of a national lead meant it was not standardised, and delivery of the programme differed across the country.

Recommendations from the Waterford evaluation included:

- ▶ *Replacing the HSE notification system with a single registration system for all childcare services, including childminders.* All childminders minding one or more children should be required to register, as a protection for children. It was noted that voluntary notification did not achieve the objective of childminders moving into the mainstream because childminders are excluded from current legislation.
- ▶ The development of an appropriate inspection process and an inspection tool for childminding settings. The self-assessment nature of the current process was questioned as there is no requirement for evidence from the childminder and no verification process.
- ▶ The CMAO role should continue as it was central in enabling childminders to move towards regulation. The evaluation identified that work of the CMAO is very intensive and relies on building a relationship of trust with childminders.
- ▶ Clear and realistic progression training routes for childminders. The Childminding QAP was perceived as an effective way of introducing childminders to the different elements of a quality childminding setting. Attendance at information sessions on Aistear and Síolta was also recommended.
- ▶ Networking opportunities should be developed for childminders. The Childminders' Network in Waterford was perceived as having a positive impact on quality – by reducing isolation and providing an informal training forum.
- ▶ Developing links to existing parent networks (including parent and toddler groups and childcare services) as a way of enhancing communications between parents, childminders, schools and childcare services in the best interests of children. The childminder is often the person who has daily contact with all of the people and services in a child's life.

Members of this Childminding Working Group who had direct experiences of the NCMI observed that the initiative might have had more success if it had concluded with the registration of childminders as originally intended. A key learning discussed by the Working Group was that the NCMI did not deliver at a consistent level nationally, as there was no national lead and it was under the direction of the 32 boards of the CCCs across the country.

Current policy on childminding

The Programme for a Partnership Government (2016) commits to developing a phased programme of reforms for childminding in Ireland. Currently supports for childminding are provided primarily through Childminding Ireland and some CCCs, with resourcing from DCYA. These supports include the childminder development grants, and a limited form of voluntary notification, although there are considerable variations nationally.

A series of national policy groups have made recommendations in relation to the childminding sector, which the Working Group integrated into its deliberations. These are reviewed below.

Report of the Expert Working Group on the Early Years Strategy (DCYA, 2013)

The recommendations of this Expert Advisory Group in relation to childminding included:

- ▶ Moving swiftly to begin regulating childminding, through an amendment to the Child Care Act 1991 – the lack of regulation exposes children to unacceptable risk and severely limits the scope of supports for raising quality standards.
- ▶ Providing the supports required to enable services to meet statutory regulations.
- ▶ A transition phase prior to the removal of the legal exemptions from regulation should include awareness-raising of the benefits of regulation for children, parents and childminders.
- ▶ A review the early years regulations and the inspection process to ensure they are proportionate and appropriate to the childminders' home environment.
- ▶ Increased funding and resources to the Early Years Inspectorate in Tusla to ensure that all services receive regular inspections and can accommodate the increased demands that will arise from the regulation of paid childminding and out-of-school services.

Better Outcomes Brighter Futures: the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014–2020 (BOBF)

BOBF's principles, goal, objectives, and transformative goals provide a basis on which to build a national childminding strategy. The outcomes to be achieved through BOBF for all children are:

- ▶ Active and healthy, physical and mental wellbeing
- ▶ The achievement of full potential in all areas of learning and development
- ▶ Safety and protection from harm
- ▶ Economic security and opportunity
- ▶ Being connected, respected and contributing to their world.

BOBF commits to develop and implement a national early years strategy for all children aged 0–6 years, covering all aspects of children's experiences in their early years and their inclusion in early years care and education services. A national strategy for the childminding sector will be a component of the Early Years Strategy.

Inter-departmental Working Group Report on Investment in Childcare (2015)

The recommendations of the Inter-departmental Working Group included:

- ▶ A stepped programme of reforms migrating from voluntary to mandatory requirements for childminders and other parts of the non-formal sector, which could include the re-introduction of a childminding advisory service.
- ▶ The Child and Family Agency inspection regime should be enhanced to enable timely inspection and registration of new services and regular re-inspection.
- ▶ Extend the Learner Fund support for childminders to enable the professionalisation of the sector.
- ▶ Continue investment in City and County Childcare Committees and the National Childcare Voluntary Collaborative to mentor and support the childminding sector in a structured way on a pathway towards the introduction of quality standards and ultimately regulation.

Action Plan on School-Age Childcare (2016)

The Government's *Action Plan on School-Age Childcare* recognises childminders as school-age childcare providers and includes childminding services in the definition of school-age childcare (SAC). Actions over 2015–2018 include developing a robust quality assurance system for childminders (delegated to this Working Group), and commissioning an independent review of the cost of providing childminding to inform any future subsidisation.

Affordable Childcare Scheme

Registered childminders are included in the 'September measures' introduced in 2017, which includes provision for a universal subsidy for parents of children from 6 months to 3 years. However, it is currently only open to those who are registered with Tusla under existing legislation – that is, fewer than 120 out of an estimated 35,000 childminders in the country.

3 Overview of the childminding sector in Ireland

The use of paid non-parental childcare, both centre-based and home-based, continues to grow in Ireland, increasing from 30% of children aged 0 to 12 years in 2007, to 38% in 2016. Recent CSO survey data indicates that 13% of families use a form of paid home-based childcare for their childcare, either relative or non-relative, in the parent’s home or in the childminder’s home.

Types of Childcare Used Q3 2016	% pre-school children	% primary school children	Average % of 0-12s
Parent/partner	62	74	70
Unpaid relative or family friend	17	16	16
Paid relative or family friend	3	3	3
Childminder / au pair / nanny	13	8	10
Crèche / Montessori / playgroup / afterschool facility	19	8	13
Other	1	1	1

TABLE 1: USAGE OF NON-PARENTAL CHILDCARE, CSO, 2017²⁹

Different categories of home-based childcare

In 2011, there were estimated to be over 19,000 paid non-relative childminders caring for over 48,000 pre-school children aged 0-5 in Ireland.³⁰ In 2017, it was estimated that an additional 21,000 childminders are caring for approximately 37,000 primary school aged children.³¹ The average number of hours per week children spend with a childminder/au pair/nanny is 27 hours for preschool children and 16 hours for school age children.

Estimates based on the latest reports from the CSO suggest there are around 35,000 childminders in total, a figure comparable to the figure of 37,000 in the OECD background report on Ireland in 2000.³²

Type of Home-based Childcare	Location of care	Employment Status
Childminder	Own home	Self-employed
Au pair/ nanny	Family home	Domestic employee
Paid friend/ relative	Variable	Casual employment

TABLE 2 CATEGORIES OF HOME-BASED CHILDCARE IN IRELAND

In 2017, there are approximately 45,000 paid home-based childcare providers of all types, and over 35,000 childminders. This estimate is based on the population results from the latest Census (2016)

²⁹ Percentages add to more than 100% because some children use more than one type of childcare.

³⁰ *Children 2020: Cost Benefit Analysis* Goodbody Economic Consultants, 2011

³¹ *Action Plan on School Age Childcare* (DCYA, 2017 p.22) citing data taken from Goodbody Economic Consultants *Children 2020: Cost Benefit Analysis* (2011), Tusla and Pobal (figures updated for the IDG Report).

³² OECD Thematic Review of Background Report, 2000

and the childcare usage rates from the most recent Quarterly National Household Survey Module on Childcare (2017), using the assumption of Goodbody Economic Consultants in 2011 that, on average, childminders care for a total 2.5 children,³³ including preschool and school age children.

Data to estimate number of childminders in Ireland	Source	Estimates
Total number of children aged 0–12 years	Census 2016	880,208
Percentage with childminder / au pair / nanny ³⁴	Quarterly National Household Survey	10%
Estimated number of children in paid childminding childcare		88,021
Average number of children per childminder / au pair / nanny	Goodbody, 2011	2.5
Estimated number of all paid childminders / au pairs / nannies for children 0–12 years		35,208

TABLE 3 ESTIMATES ON THE PROFILE OF THE CHILDMINDING SECTOR IN IRELAND

Childminding by relatives

Parents often choose relatives or family friends, such as grandparents, aunts or uncles, to provide care for children. As identified by the CSO survey, childcare provided by a relative or family friend is more likely to be unpaid than paid (16% unpaid compared to 3% paid). Where relative/family friend childcare is paid, it may be at below the market rate.

Paid home-based childcare

The Quarterly National Household Survey does not report separate categories for childminders, au pairs and nannies. However, according to the findings of *Growing Up in Ireland*, au pairs and nannies are the main childcare providers for approximately 1% of all nine-month-olds and 1% of all three-year-olds.³⁵ *Growing Up in Ireland* groups childminders in the category of non-relative carer, alongside friends, neighbours, au pairs and nannies.

³³ The estimates in Children 2020 were based on the 2009 Quarterly National Household Survey Module on Childcare (Central Statistics Office, 2009) and birth rates provided by the Department of Social Protection.

³⁴ Childminder / au pair / nanny are not reported separately by *Quarterly National Household Survey* in 2009 or 2017.

³⁵ *Growing Up in Ireland National Longitudinal Study of Children DEVELOPMENT FROM BIRTH TO THREE YEARS: report 5, 2013*

4 Definitions of childminding

Some current definitions of childminding

When we speak about childminding, what we have in mind is home-based childcare in the childminder's own home for preschool and school going children. When it comes to legislation and regulation, however, things are not as straightforward. The various definitions of childminding in our current legislation, regulations and national guidelines for childminders are summarised in the following table.

from **Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations (2016)**

'Childminder' means a person who provides a childminding service.

'Childminding service' means a pre-school service, which may include an overnight pre-school service, offered by a person who single-handedly takes care of pre-school children, which may include the person's own children, in the person's home for a total of more than 2 hours per day, except where the exemptions provided in section 58L of the Act apply.

from **Child Care Act 1991, (section 58, exemptions from provisions)**

Section 58 of the Child Care Act 1991 exempts the following forms of childcare from regulation:

- (a) the care of one or more pre-school children undertaken by a relative of the child or children or the spouse of such relative.
 - (b) a person taking care of one or more pre-school children of the same family and no other such children (other than that person's own such children) in that person's home.
 - (c) a person taking care of not more than 3 pre-school children of different families (other than that person's own such children) in that person's home.
-

Planning Regulations (2001)

Under the Planning Regulations (2001), childminding is defined as an exempted business:

'Childminding' means the activity of minding no more than 6 children, including the children, if any, of the person minding, in the house of that person, for profit or gain.

The National Guidelines for Childminders (2008) defines a 'childminder' as follows:

'A childminder is a self-employed person who minds other people's children in the childminder's own home.'

The need for a new, agreed definition of 'childminding'

The Working Group discussed the implications arising from the fact that 'childminding' might currently mean different things to different people. The following are among the anomalies and unsatisfactory consequences of this confusion in terminology.

- ▶ The Child Care Act 1991 exempts from regulation all childminders caring for three or fewer preschool-aged children, childminders caring for children from just one family, and the care of

school-aged children, so excluding the majority of childminding services operating in Ireland from national regulation. Childminders (members of Childminding Ireland) consulted on behalf of this Working Group did not want to continue to be exempt. See the survey included with the ancillary documents. The Child Care Act 1991 defines childminding services as ‘pre-school services’, caring for ‘pre-school children’, i.e., children under the age of six years not attending primary school. Confining the scope of the childminding definition to pre-school children does not account for the contribution of childminding services in the provision of school-age childcare.

- ▶ A 2013 amendment³⁶ to the 1991 Child Care Act introduced a definition of ‘early years services’, covering both ECEC and SAC services, which supports the migration to regulation of childminding services for primary school children. However, the Parents’ Survey indicates that children and young people over the age of 12 years, avail of childminding. Restricting the regulatory and inspection framework to childcare services from birth to the end of primary school will exclude from regulation a cohort of childcare/childminding services for secondary school children.
- ▶ Further legislative amendment is required to extend the definition of ‘early years’ services to include children in secondary school, and to raise the age limit to align with the upper age threshold for ACS eligibility, i.e. 15 years.
- ▶ Furthermore, various schemes are inconsistent with each other on key elements such as age thresholds for children (pre-school and school age children) and the minimum and maximum number of children that can be cared for. For example, while the Affordable Childcare Scheme includes children up to 15 years of age, the Childcare Services Tax Relief applies to children up to 18 years of age. The relief is only for those minding no more than three children, which means Tusla-registered childminding services are not eligible, while exempt childminding services are. All schemes need to be harmonised with legal definitions.

In short, we need to clarify and amend the definitions of ‘childminder’ and ‘childminding service’ because:

- ▶ There is currently no legislative basis for the majority of childminding services to transition from the informal sector to mandatory regulation and registration as they are currently exempt from regulation under the 1991 Child Care Act.
- ▶ The child age range for eligibility for the Affordable Childcare Scheme is proposed to be 6 months to 15 years. It is important to make provisions for childminders to participate in the scheme by clarifying the age ranges of children that childminders are permitted to care for if they are to participate in the scheme and to comply with the associated registration and regulatory requirements.

Proposed definition of ‘childminder’ and ‘childminding service’

The Working Group proposes the following definitions:

A **‘childminder’** is a person who provides a childminding service.

A **‘childminding service’** is a childcare service, which may include an overnight service, offered by a person who single-handedly takes care of children aged from 0–15 years old, which may include the person’s own children, in the person’s home for payment for a total of more than 2 hours per day.

³⁶ <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2013/act/40/section/92/enacted/en/html#>

These definitions accord with international approaches discussed by the Working Group – for example in Scotland, New Zealand, and England and Wales, where a childminding service is defined broadly as one that cares for one or more children for payment, some of whom can be the childminders’ own children.

The Working Group suggests that the reference to children in the definition should not specifically mention ‘pre-school children’ given that childminders in Ireland provide mixed age childcare for children from birth into adolescence. The inclusion of the childminder’s own children in ratios for school age children will need to be considered.

This proposed definition does not include incidental or short term care of children by neighbours, family and friends, as this would not meet the minimum required length of time of minding children to be deemed a childminder.

It is the view of the members of the Working Group that the proposed definitions closely reflect practice on the ground.

Exclusion of relative care from the definition

The Working Group proposes that care of children by a relative in the relative’s home should continue to be exempt from the definition given that relatives tend to care for children to help family members, providing kinship care rather than as a business. While relatives may get some contribution towards the costs of minding the child, this would not normally constitute payment for services at market rate.

However, it is proposed that childminders who are caring for children they are related to as well as other unrelated children,³⁷ should be permitted to register as childminders, if they fulfil the eligibility criteria.

Exclusion of au pairs and nannies from the definition

The national Action Plan for School-age Childcare³⁸ includes in-home childcare as paid childminding, where the childminder is employed directly by the parents and the service is provided in the child’s home, but delegated the definition of childminders for future quality assurance purposes to this Working Group. We propose that au pairs and nannies are not included in the definition of childminding services at this point, although the Working Group recognises their valuable role in providing home-based care in the child’s home.

The rationale for their current exclusion is that:

- ▶ Nannies and au pairs are directly employed by parents, unlike self-employed childminders. In the case of au pairs, the Irish Workplace Commission has ruled that au pairs are domestic employees with an entitlement to the minimum wage. Au pairs live in the child’s home, as do some nannies, which impacts on their employment conditions.
- ▶ Because they work in the parent/child’s home rather than their own home, au pairs and nannies could not be held solely responsible for the safety or suitability standards of that home.
- ▶ There are legal issues surrounding the regulation and inspection of the family home by public authorities.

³⁷ International experience of including relatives in government funding schemes has been negative. The cost of government subsidies in the Netherlands increased dramatically from 2005 to 2009 as a result of including relatives: this was resolved by requiring childminders to also mind unrelated children (Boogaard, Bollen, & Dijkers, 2013).

³⁸ DCYA 2017 p. 17/

Even with the exclusion of au pairs and nannies from the proposed definition, it is the view of the Working Group that the DCYA should continue to explore how best to ensure children’s protection, health and development while in the care of au pairs and nannies.

Proposals: Legislation

- 1** Amend the Child Care Act, 1991, S.58 to allow for the inclusion of the following more comprehensive definition of childminding services in the Early Years regulations (2016).
“Childminding service” means a childcare service, which may include an overnight service, offered by a person who single-handedly takes care of children aged from 0–15 years old, which may include the person’s own children, in the person’s home for payment for a total of more than 2 hours per day.
- 2** Amend the extended definition of early years services in the Child and Family Agency Act 2013, S.92 (which amended the Child Care Act , 1991, Part VII) in order to include school aged childcare up to age 15, raising the age limit to align with the upper child age threshold for eligibility for the Affordable Childcare Scheme.
- 3** Start the development of the legislative amendments in year one of the strategy as the legislative process can take some time.
- 4** Review the various definitions of childminding services and eligibility criteria underpinning national policy and programmes to ensure consistency and their support for national policy goals for children and families.
- 5** Review how best to support in-home childcare by au pairs and nannies to ensure children’s protection, health and development, and possible parental access to subsidies.

5 Registration, regulation and inspection

International learning on childminding regulation

- ▶ International evidence suggests that some of key features of childminding that impact on the quality of the service to children and parents are level of formal education of childminders
- ▶ The availability of continuing relevant training for childminders
- ▶ The group size and the adult/child ratio in the childminding setting
- ▶ The existence of a government-sponsored registration/licensing regime.³⁹

All of these features were found to be predictive of positive ratings in the caregiver's behaviour with the child, in the caregiver-child interaction, and in the physical environment, activities and learning materials for children. When all other factors that were amenable to regulation were controlled for, licensing alone was found to be predictive of better quality.

Appropriate regulation also helps define and enforce health, environmental and programme standards and to ensure some degree of equity for parents and children in poorer neighbourhoods.⁴⁰ The research support provided to the Working Group indicates that migration to a regulated sector can be achieved, with Scotland showing how this might happen in Ireland.

Current policy on the regulation of childminding

Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, is the statutory regulator of early years' services in Ireland and has responsibility for registering and inspecting early years' settings, including childminders, for children from birth to six-years for non-school-going children. The Child and Family Agency Act 2013 amended⁴¹ part VII of the 1991 Child Care Act to define the scope of school-age services, which includes childminding services, to allow for their future registration and inspection.

As it stands, the vast majority of childminding services are excluded from the current regulatory framework under the exemptions of the 1991 Child Care Act. Approximately 120 services are now registered with Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate, down from 257 childminders notified to the HSE in 2011.⁴² Tusla is of the view that there could be a significant number of paid childminders who should be registered;⁴³ however, childminders consistently express their dissatisfaction with current regulations, as they are not designed for childminding settings.⁴⁴

Voluntary notification

In the absence of registration for childminders, some City and County Childcare Committees (CCCs) continue to offer a limited version of voluntary notification for exempt services, with childminders

³⁹ Clarke-Stewart et al, 2002

⁴⁰ OECD, 2012

⁴¹ <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2013/act/40/section/92/enacted/en/html#>

⁴² Start Strong 2012

⁴³ DCYA, 2017 p. 27

⁴⁴ Cf. the Childminder Discussion Day Feedback in Appendix 3.

self-certifying that they meet basic criteria. In December 2017, Childcare Committee Ireland undertook a survey of all CCCs in relation to the supports offered to childminders. All of the CCCs responded, and just over half of them indicated that they continue to operate the Childminding Voluntary Notification System. In addition, Childminding Ireland supports registered childminders in meeting the standards of the Early Years' Regulations – for example, by providing them with sample policy and procedures approved by Tusla, and with practical assistance with resources.

Early Years Services Regulations

Childcare services registered with Tusla are inspected under Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services Regulations 2016), including childminders minding four or five children. These regulations provided the basis for Tusla to establish Ireland's first national register of early years' services, providing a national approach to inspection and monitoring of services on the register. The regulations provide the legal basis for Tusla's Inspectorate to enter and inspect a registered childminder's home.

Elements of the regulations – for example those relating to the premises and space, and to changing and sleeping requirements – are not suitable to a home-based environment as they were designed with centre-based childcare services in mind. Childminders consulted by the Working Group cited the inappropriateness of the regulations as a disincentive to register, and expressed a wish for specific childminding standards regulations tailored to the home-based childcare context.

The issue of exempt services

However, the current regulations do not apply at all to childminding services regarded as exempt under section 58 of the Child Care Act 1991, and this means that such services have no mechanism for registration, deregistration or complaint, and there is no inspection against regulations. Furthermore, exempt childminders are also excluded from the legal requirement for childcare practitioners to be vetted under the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016. Garda vetting was valued by the vast majority of parents in the parental survey undertaken to inform the Working Group. This is a basic regulatory requirement for childminders in all other jurisdictions examined by the Working Group. Given the home-based nature of the service, the Working Group believes that this requirement should also apply to other people in the home. Garda vetting was a feature of childminding valued by the vast majority of parents in the parental survey undertaken to inform the Working Group.

Finally, since there is no obligation on exempt childminding services to develop and implement a Safeguarding Statement, childminders are not specifically targeted by CCCs to undergo the Always Children First Training Programme,⁴⁵ the child protection training module tailored to the childcare sector.

Options for moving to registration

The Working Group considered how best to sequence the childminding sector's stepped migration to registration in a way that balances the need to encourage substantial numbers of childminders to move to regulation in the medium- and long-term. It was recognised that while there are childminders already meeting minimum standards, it is expected that there will a large number who

⁴⁵ <https://www.pobal.ie/BetterStart/Pages/EarlyYearsChildProtectionProgramme.aspx>

will have to take significant steps to meet minimum regulatory standards in order to ensure that children in their care receive protection and support.

The two main options discussed by the Working Group are described below.

Option 1: following the approach of the NCMI

The first option considered by the Working Group was to continue with a similar approach to that adopted in the NCMI as an interim measure prior to statutory regulation in the medium term. This involves a voluntary registration system operated by a local agency or a new national childminding committee, with childminders' obligations relating primarily to Garda vetting and basic training, and childminders being incentivised to register through access to public funding and quality supports.

The Working Group concluded that this approach would not provide the level of oversight and verification necessary to ensure child protection, health and development. Also, there would be challenges with validating registration, particularly on a large scale. From a number of perspectives, it became clear that, it would be better to work with the national regulator (Tusla), as the appropriate body who can provide an effective, nationally consistent system of registration and regulation for childminders, including de-registration where necessary, as part of their statutory regulatory brief.

Option 2: a phased approach to registration and regulation

The second option looked at by the Working Group was a phased approach to registration and regulation to ensure that childminding services meet a tailored set of minimum regulatory standards.

The Working Group suggests an approach not unlike that adopted for centre-based services, where regulatory standards are phased in and commenced over a defined period. The requirements and timing of these should be clearly and widely communicated (through a communications strategy) to the childminding sector well in advance of their introduction. Childminding services must satisfy the particular standards as they are introduced.

The move to a regulated sector should begin by the end of the first three years of the proposed National Childminding Strategy (see page 38), and it should be based on a set of minimum regulatory standards and on the concurrent development of the supports required to help childminders meet those standards. Substantial groundwork will be required to support this migration.

Proposals: regulation, registration and inspection

- 6** Develop the required amendments to the 1991 Child Care Act. The Working Group was aware that the DCYA is reviewing the Child Care Act 1991 over the next three years with a view to reform. There is a case for amending the Act separately from this review and reform process to support childminders' migration to become regulated providers of childcare.
- 7** Establish an expert group on Registration, Regulation and Inspection that would develop minimum regulatory standards for childminding services for children from birth to 15 years. This expert group could start by developing the minimum regulatory standards⁴⁶ required for initial registration, covering, but not necessarily limited, to:
 - ▶ The suitability of the childminder
 - Up-to-date Certification in First Aid for children

⁴⁶ Childminding Ireland is currently participating in the consultation process on the draft Quality and Regulatory Framework being developed by Tusla for childminding services under existing Early Years' regulations (2016).

- Two written references
 - Insurance for the childminding service
 - Certification in Always Children First training
 - Certification in at least the QQI level 5 minor award in childminding, or other recognised qualifications for early years on the DCYA list⁴⁷
 - Copy of the vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the National Vetting Bureau Children & Vulnerable Persons Act, 2012.
- ▶ The suitability of other people in the home
 - A copy of the vetting disclosure for all members of the household aged over 18 received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the National Vetting Bureau Children & Vulnerable Persons Act, 2012.
 - ▶ The suitability of the home; the childminder should be required to present:
 - Copy of health and safety risk assessment
 - Copy of a Fire Safety Plan

8 Create a Communications Strategy, to communicate the benefits of registration, to childminders and parents.

Why these proposals are important

Minimum regulatory standards are required in relation to the health, welfare and development of the child, proportionate to the home environment and mixed age cohort. The Working Group recognises that for registration additional regulatory minimum standards may be developed over time. The standards might include a requirement for childminders to achieve a QQI level 5 major award in childcare/ECCE over time – subject to the recommendation of the expert group on Education and Professional Development. The Registration, Regulation and Inspection expert group should also clarify adult/child ratios and the maximum number of children that a childminder can care for at one time, and throughout a day.

To deal with the potentially large numbers of childminders seeking to register, it is proposed that Tusla be adequately resourced to commence registration and inspection under the regulations, and that Tusla could begin to inspect childminders on a sampling protocol once they are registered. It is also proposed that registration with Tusla and compliance with the statutory childminding regulations could allow childminding services to become eligible providers of childcare, which would be subsidised through the Affordable Childcare Scheme. Childminding services would have to continue to be compliant with any future additional childminding regulations.

These recommendations relate to the development of minimum regulatory standards and a system of registration and regulation. There is also requirement to support childminders to meet national standards for quality practice, as informed by Síolta and Aistear.

First steps

The Working Group suggests that the migration process commence by targeting those childminders who can be identified and begin working with them to build their capacity to register. These childminders might be drawn from the 700+ members of Childminding Ireland and from among childminders currently notified with their CCC. These childminders are already Garda-vetted and receive supports and training from CMI and CCCs. Many of these childminders are already engaged

⁴⁷ <https://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/earlyyears/20171018DCYAEarlyYearsRecognisedQualifications.pdf>

in quality initiatives and have a full QQI level 5 in childcare. They will be ready to register once the regulations are in place.

There may be scope for using existing measures, such as the Childminders' Development Grant and a reformed Childcare Services Tax Relief, to encourage exempt childminders to register in a new regulatory and support system, using such financial supports to improve quality, as suggested in CMI's consultation with its members.

6 Quality standards and supports

Key policy areas and the dimensions of quality

The Working Group considered the two key policy areas influencing quality standards in childminding services:

- ▶ Support systems for engagement with quality development, and
- ▶ Levels of accredited qualifications, and continuous professional development.

The dimensions of quality

Quality is usually described along two dimensions:

- ▶ Structural factors: group size, adult/child ratio, staff training and qualifications, curriculum, staff conditions, and staff turnover, and
- ▶ Process factors: the child's daily experience, communication, interactions and relationships.⁴⁸

Of these, structural factors are most amenable to regulation,⁴⁹ while process quality tends to be developed best in a community of practice.⁵⁰ It is important to distinguish between minimum requirements and regulatory compliance, as described in the previous section, and predictors of high-quality childminding practices, as seen in the Sólta Framework.⁵¹

International learning on childminding quality

Current research shows that childminding has the potential to provide a rich and varied, high-quality learning environment for young children, because:

- ▶ It gives attention to individual children's interests
- ▶ Close partnerships are possible between the parents and the caregivers
- ▶ A single caregiver provides continuity and consistency of care
- ▶ There is the potential for childminders to develop close relationships and connections between the home, pre-school, the family and the community for the benefit of the child.

Childminding provides a form of pedagogical approach to children's developmental and educational outcomes that is distinct from any other type of early years setting.⁵²

Recent research points to positive outcomes for children with childminders, particularly for under threes, in terms of child-caregiver interactions:

- ▶ Smaller group size is linked to higher process quality⁵³

⁴⁸ Dalli et al, 2011

⁴⁹ Clarke-Stewart et al, 2003

⁵⁰ Wenger, 1998

⁵¹ Observation by Department of Education and Skills.

⁵² Ang, Brooker & Stephen, 2016

⁵³ Laevers, Buyse, Daems, & Declercq, 2016

- ▶ Younger children may develop better in smaller non-parental settings with fewer peers and greater adult/child ratios.⁵⁴
- ▶ Higher verbal ability has been associated with the use of childminding.⁵⁵
- ▶ Better emotional and behavioural self-regulation is also linked to childminding.⁵⁶
- ▶ Children with childminders have been found to transition more effectively into pre-school and school⁵⁷ – this follows from the continuity of personalised care and support from babyhood right through to school-age.⁵⁸

Factors related to improved quality

The following two factors have been most clearly related to improved quality:

- ▶ **The level of education of childminders.** In other jurisdictions, both initial qualification requirements and provision for continuous professional development can take various forms. Research has shown that quality childminding correlated with both higher levels of general education and recent specialised training.⁵⁹ Childminder training has been shown to be most effective when combined with mentoring in network groups.⁶⁰
- ▶ **Support offered by staffed childminding networks.** Networks offering ongoing support and training to childminders are one strategy for quality support and improvement. Networks led by a well-educated coordinator, who has experience in home-based care, are particularly effective in promoting quality childminding.⁶¹ This is the predominant form of childminding support in Denmark, France and Australia, where childminding networks are organised systems (not just self-selecting groups) for the delivery of specific standards of care.⁶²

Current policy on childminding quality

In addition to the Early Years' regulations, there are two national frameworks promoting quality for early years for all types of settings, including childminding. These are *Síolta*, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and *Aistear*: the Early Childhood Framework. The recent Action Plan on School Age Childcare includes the development of quality standards and a quality assurance framework, but it explicitly excludes school-age childminding services.

A number of initiatives are in place to support the implementation of these frameworks.

- ▶ **Better Start** Quality Development Service is a national initiative to bring an integrated national approach to developing quality in ECEC for children aged from birth to six years, by supporting the implementation of *Síolta* and *Aistear* frameworks. Even though *Síolta* includes quality practice standards for childminders, because of the small numbers of children in their services, Tusla registered childminders cannot access this support.

⁵⁴ Melhuish, 2016

⁵⁵ McGinnity, Russell, & Murray, 2015; Melhuish, Gardiner, & Morris, 2017

⁵⁶ Melhuish et al, 2017; Russell, Kenny, & McGinnity, 2016

⁵⁷ Coplan, Findlay, & Schneider, 2010; Grace & Bowes, 2011

⁵⁸ Ang, Brooker, & Stephen, 2016

⁵⁹ Forry, Iruka, Tout et al, 2013

⁶⁰ Lanigan, 2011; Porter et al., 2011

⁶¹ Bromer & Henly, 2009

⁶² Mooney & Statham, 2003; Owen & Roby, 2006

- ▶ The national Síolta/Aistear implementation initiatives are focused on centre-based provision, although some childminders may have attended Síolta workshops run by CCCs.
- ▶ The Department of Education and Skills' early years' education-focused inspections are only available to the very small number of Tusla registered childminders offering places under ECCE.

However, Childminding Ireland is promoting quality standards for its member childminders, by requiring members to sign up to certain standards, including Garda vetting, childminding insurance, as well as a health and safety assessment of the home, and a child protection statement. These standards are being raised to include training in paediatric first aid, acceptance of a code of ethics, and Tusla's universal e-learning Child Protection Training. As of 2018, Always Children First Training for childminders is also being rolled out to Childminding Ireland members, in collaboration with the National Early Years Children First office.

CCI Survey 2017 showed that CCCs continue to offer supports to childminders in the following forms:

Level 1	Signposting and provision of information including, information leaflets, emails, access to CPD etc. (All 30 CCCs responded)
Level 2	More intensive supports that level 1, group sessions, mentoring and one to one support (7 out of the 30 CCCs provide Level 1 and 2 support)
Level 3	Significant follow up and continuous one to one support/cluster sessions – (5 out of the 30 CCCs provided Level 1, 2 and 3 support)

Current education for childminders

The Childminding Quality Awareness Programme launched by the Government in 2004 was a non-accredited 10-hour introductory course that included two-hour sessions on child development, hygiene, health and safety, child well-being and the importance of play. About 6,500 childminders had completed the programme by 2012.

Although training is available in paediatric first aid, manual handling, food handling and fire safety through the CCCs and from Childminding Ireland, it is often difficult for childminders to access it and there is little incentive for them to do so. The Working Group feels that childminders should have access to continuous professional development.

The education and training developed specifically for childminders includes a 40-hour, QQI Level 5 minor Childminding Practice award that is currently unavailable. Since 2007, according to QQI statistics, 356 people have completed this training and received the award, which is currently under review.

From 2016, all registered childcare practitioners working directly with preschool children, including Tusla registered childminders, must hold a minimum of QQI Level 5 major award in Early Childhood Care and Education (or an equivalent recognised qualification). If they intended to retire by 2021, they could a Grandfathering Declaration, which exempts them from the requirement to have the award.

The QQI Level 5 major award comprises eight component awards, which require review to ensure that the knowledge, skills, and competencies are relevant and appropriate to childminding. In this context, it is interesting to note that some childminders have found that the work experience component, in particular, is not appropriate for childminding practice nor is it feasible for working childminders, who would need to close their business in order to do a work placement. Working Group members identified that while some components are relevant to both home and centre based care, specific childminding components should be developed.

Until 2016, childminders registered with Tusla were eligible to apply for a subsidy from the DCYA's Learner Fund to undertake this training. Currently no grant assistance is available to any childminders to pursue training or qualifications.

Current childminding networks

Childminders have previously had self-selecting networks via City and County Childcare Committees under NCMI, and some remain in operation locally. However, isolation and lack of peer group support are mentioned by childminders as a recurring issue.

Nationally, Childminding Ireland offers networking opportunities by phone, email and social media through:

- ▶ An online member's forum, which is very active
- ▶ Local network events, organised by members
- ▶ An out-of-hours peer support members service is under development
- ▶ Weekly engagement with members promoting quality childminding by email
- ▶ Phone support for any childminder or parent provided by former childminders who hold ECEC qualifications
- ▶ Training events for childminders or parents provide networking opportunities as do membership meetings
- ▶ New networking events being developed in collaboration with a number of Childcare Committees.

Local face-to-face peer support networks need be developed, supported and made widely available for all childminders to access. In some areas, this may mean building on current networks, and in other areas, new networks will have to be created.

Education standards for childminders: the options

In the review of regulated childminding systems, it was noted that, apart from the Netherlands, no jurisdiction currently has an education requirement for childminders prior to registration, and in the Netherlands, only a certificate at the equivalent of QQI level 3 is required. However, almost all jurisdictions require completion of induction training, which varies in length from 18 hours (Switzerland) to 160 hours (Denmark, France and Germany).⁶³

In this context, the advantages and disadvantages of both QQI level 4 and QQI level 5 as the legal minimum qualification for childminders to operate a childminding service were considered by the Working Group. It was agreed that setting QQI level 4 as the minimum would be a retrograde step as it is below the minimum regulatory qualification requirements for centre-based early years' services, and the learning outcomes for Level 4 are to enable the worker to work under direct supervision, providing assistance and support within an ECCE setting.

By contrast, a Level 5 qualification was deemed a better fit for the childminding context, because its learning outcomes are intended to enable the learner to acquire the knowledge, skills and competence to work independently. In addition, since ECEC Level 5 major award is the minimum qualification for centre-based staff, an appropriate award at this level would support childminders' progression through the QQI's national qualifications framework, should they wish to do so.

⁶³ Gastouderopvang in West-Europese Landen, Boogaard, Bollen & Dijkers, 2013.

Additionally, if childminders opt to deliver the ECCE programme, childminders will be required to have, among other requirements, a QQI level 6 ECCE qualification.

However, to achieve a major ECEC award at level 5 takes over 400 hours, as it consists of eight components. This is considerably in excess of training requirements in other jurisdictions, which vary from 18 hours to 160 hours. The Working Group suggests that the QQI level 5 minor award in Childminding qualification could form part of the initial regulatory requirement for providing a childminding service. The content of the component could be reviewed to ensure its current and ongoing relevance, and could potentially be delivered by ETBs and other providers. Equivalent qualifications should also be considered.

Over time, childminders could also be supported to complete additional minor QQI level 5 awards, adapted to a home-based setting as necessary. In particular, it is recommended that components on mixed age childcare and business for childminding services be developed.

To encourage childminders to achieve these qualifications, it will be necessary to provide access to a form of learner fund or equivalent. Some childminders, given their age and the length of time they have worked in the sector may need to sign a Grandfathering Declaration to exempt them from minimum qualification requirements, as is the case in centre-based services. Consideration could also be given to implementing recognition of prior learning or a competency assessment.

Divergent views on future mandatory education requirements

There was consensus in the Working Group that initial mandatory training for childminders should include the minor Childminding Practice award at QQI Level 5, that funds should be provided to encourage childminders to seek childcare qualifications at QQI Levels 5–8, and that specific childminding components should be developed for special purpose awards or degrees. Childminders could opt to complete further childcare qualifications if they wished to, and this would be necessary to provide ECCE or move to other types of childcare provision.

However, two divergent views emerged within the Working Group on future mandatory education requirements for childminders:

- ▶ Childminders should complete a major award in ECEC at QQI level 5 over time, within five years for example, in order to remain on the childminding register. This would be the same as the requirement for centre-based staff, giving childminders parity of professional status, and access to the provision of government subsidies on an equal footing with centres.
- ▶ The requirement to gain a major award in ECEC at QQI level 5 will form a barrier to registration and regulation for childminders. Under current regulations (2016), this requirement has coincided with a falling number of childminders registering with Tusla: from 179 in July 2016 to fewer than 120 by July 2017. Internationally, such a requirement is not found in thriving regulated childminding systems, where education is delivered in network communities of practice.

This is an issue to be explored further by the expert group Education and Professional Development.

Development of childminding networks

In relation to quality development and assurance, staffed childminding networks are effective in delivering individual support, mentoring and continued professional development. It is important that such a service is staffed by well qualified support workers with experience of childminding, who can deliver a system of training, mentoring and quality development through local networks of childminders, organised into a national structure for consistency of delivery. The Working Group

suggests that key to the achievement of national training and quality goals will be the role of a Childminding Support Officer.

Another means of supporting childminding networks could include linking groups of childminders in a locality to provide access to resources, such as a toy and equipment lending through local libraries, Family Resource Centres, or perhaps through Parent and Toddler groups, where many childminders already network informally at local level.⁶⁴

Training could be facilitated and organised through network groups to enhance the transfer of training into practice. Blended learning (a mix of classroom and online) with tutor support could be investigated, combined with opportunities for structured opportunities for peer learning, such as the Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) programme uses to achieve a throughput of 900 participants per year for its special purpose QQI level 6 award.

Quality support and assurance are central to good outcomes for children, and are at the heart of the implementation of the ECCE and Affordable Childcare schemes. The Working Group recommend that there is continuity and integration of quality principles, standards and indicators across all types of programmes and services for children within the Síolta and Aistear frameworks. With that in mind, the expert group dealing with Quality Standards, Mentoring and Network Development should consider a quality assurance process to implement Síolta and Aistear in childminding practice. This will help ensure the quality inputs that can produce quality outcomes for children.

Proposals: quality standards and supports

- 9** Establish an expert group on Quality Standards, Mentoring and Network Development to recommend appropriate quality standards for childminding in line with the Síolta Framework.
- 10** As part of the national childminding office, create a system of staffed childminding networks, facilitated by childcare professionals with experience in childminding.
- 11** Once regulatory and quality standards have been agreed, establish an expert group to develop education and professional training for childminders:
 - ▶ Redevelop the QQI Level 5 minor award in Childminding, alongside basic training in paediatric first aid and Always Children First.
 - ▶ Review other QQI Level 5 components with view to including mixed age childcare and business practice for childminders.
 - ▶ Consider educational development for childminders in the longer term: continuous professional development, special purpose awards and major awards at different levels.
- 12** Provide childminders with access to a learner fund or equivalent so they can achieve further childcare qualifications should they wish to.
- 13** Introduce a Grandfathering Declaration Clause for those close to retirement from childminding.

⁶⁴ Bauters & Vandenbroeck, 2017.

7 Funding and financial supports

Current policy for children and parents using childminding

Childminders are not eligible to provide places to children whose parents wish to avail of a subvention under the Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) programme or under any of the Training and Employment Childcare (TEC) programmes. Only a small number of registered childminders may offer children places under the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme – those who hold QQI level 6 in ECEC as a room leader. Even fewer registered childminders may offer children places under the Access and Inclusion Model.

Only registered childminders will be eligible to provide places for children whose parents wish to avail of a subsidy under the Affordable Childcare Scheme (ACS). The current More Affordable Childcare measures, which were introduced in September 2017 in advance of the implementation of the ACS, are delivered primarily through centre-based services. Only parents of children from 6 months to entry into ECCE, using a Tusla-registered childminder, may access the universal element of the current measures.

Chapters 5 and 6 of this report set out the regulatory and quality enhancement pathways through which childminding services can achieve national regulated standards for quality practice, and in doing so become eligible to offer children places under the ACS. The Working Group proposes that only registered childminding services should be eligible to offer places under the ACS and the ECCE programme.

Current policy for childminders

Childminders Development Grant

The Childminders Development Grant (€1,000) is designed to assist childminders already providing a childminding service in their own homes to enhance the safety and quality of the service they offer through the purchase of small capital items, equipment, toys or minor adaptation costs. It may also give financial assistance to new or prospective childminders with their initial set-up costs. However, access to this grant varies by location; childminders cannot access it at all in certain areas, and the criteria for access can vary from place to place. In addition, in the past, childminders in receipt of welfare payments have sometimes availed of start-up grants through Department of Social Protection schemes such as the Back to Enterprise Allowance or Short-Term Enterprise Allowance⁶⁵ schemes.

Childcare services tax relief

Childcare services tax relief was recommended initially in the *National Childcare Strategy* (1999) as a means of support to self-employed women outside the welfare net. Childminders may be eligible for an annual €15,000 childcare services tax relief⁶⁶ if they are registered as self-employed and do not care for more than three children up to 18 years of age at any one time, and are 'notified' to the

⁶⁵ <http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Enterprise-Allowance-Self-Employed.aspx>

<http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Short-Term-Enterprise-Allowance.aspx>

⁶⁶ <https://www.revenue.ie/en/personal-tax-credits-reliefs-and-exemptions/children/childcare-services/index.aspx>

HSE/CCCs.⁶⁷ A childminder could have an income from another source and still avail of the exemption on their childminding income. However, the childminder must make an annual return to Revenue pay the PRSI due – this is currently €500 per annum for Class S PRSI. If a childminder does not apply for the Childcare Services Tax relief, or is earning over the current €15,000 gross threshold per annum, then the income is taxable.⁶⁸

While welcome, this tax relief has some limitations:

- ▶ The childminder can only mind three or fewer children.
- ▶ If a childminder is registered with Tusla (i.e. minding four or five children), they cannot access the relief.
- ▶ In addition, the current limit of €15,000 may discourage the childminder from increasing the number of childcare places they provide.

Childminders and commercial rates

Childminders are not liable to commercial rates, as childminding is regarded as taking place in a domestic house rather than as a business premises under Planning & Development Regulations (2001).

Costs review

The DCYA has commissioned an independent review of the cost of providing childcare, which will inform any future subsidisation schemes (DCYA, 2017). Unfortunately, the true cost of providing childminding will not be captured, because only currently registered childminders will be surveyed.

In addition, the above mentioned funding and financial support mechanisms should be reviewed. There may be scope to reconfigure existing schemes to encourage childminders to migrate to a reformed regulatory and support system. The financial supports could also be mobilised to help meet the goals of the minimum regulatory standards and quality standards to be developed as part of the proposed National Childminding Strategy.

Proposals: funding and financial supports

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 14 | Establish a funding and financial support expert group to review the effectiveness and efficiency of the funding and financial supports to childminding services |
| 15 | All registered and regulated childminding services should be eligible to apply to deliver the ACS and other government funded schemes |

⁶⁷ Revenue's policy has not been updated to reflect the registration provisions of The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016, because this Tax relief is not available to Tusla registered childminders.

⁶⁸ <http://www.dlrcc.ie/News/further-information.html>

8 Strategy and implementation

Current policy

The CCCs and NVCOs, including Childminding Ireland, have been funded since 2000 to support the implementation of national policies relating to the expansion and quality improvement of early years' services in Ireland. Currently, however, Childminding Ireland is the only national organisation focused on childminding and, although some CCCs engage with childminders and administer the Childminder Development Grants, there are no systematic supports at local level.

There is currently no specific development or implementation infrastructure for childminding at local level since the gradual demise of the Childminder Advisory Services since 2011. It is vital that infrastructure be put in place to deliver the supports, networking, training and education recommended to implement registration and regulation of childminders nationally.

Options discussed

The implementation of NCMI depended largely on the appointment of a childminding advisory officer (CMAO) in each City and County Childcare Committee. The CMAOs worked to develop quality through one-to-one relationships offering support, training, and networking opportunities.

Unfortunately, the majority of networks established by CMAOs have not survived without them. The CCI Survey 2017 shows that only 7 CCCs currently offer some support to childminding networks in their county. The Working Group agreed that supports that the NCMI system created should be carried forward in a structure that can provide consistent delivery of supports nationally.

Therefore, it was suggested that an appropriately resourced National Childminding Office or support service be established with a national coordination role to oversee the development of a regional and local childminding support structure. While providing local supports, the team structure would allow for professional supervision and peer learning through a team and regional team leader approach, leading to more consistent provision of support services for childminders.

Proposals: strategy and implementation

- 16** Establish a National Childminding Strategy informed by the proposals of this Working Group to coordinate the regulatory and quality support aspects within one coherent framework. The National Childminding Strategy should be included in the National Early Years Strategy
- 17** Establish the following expert groups to further develop the pathway to quality supports and assurance for childminding:
 - ▶ Minimum standards, registration, regulation and inspection
 - ▶ Quality standards, mentoring and network development
 - ▶ Education and professional development
 - ▶ Communication strategy
 - ▶ Funding and financial supports
 - ▶ Monitoring and review of strategy implementation.

- 18** Establish an appropriately resourced National Childminding Office to ensure the delivery of the National Childminding Strategy. Suggested functions of the Office would be:
- ▶ Developing, in partnership with the DCYA and relevant stakeholders, an implementation plan for the National Childminding Strategy, and annual work plans
 - ▶ Managing the regional and local support staffed networks for childminding services
 - ▶ Providing strategic operational direction
 - ▶ Monitoring and adjusting the implementation of the National Childminding Strategy
 - ▶ Implementing a national childminding communications strategy.
- 19** Commission a specialist to produce a feasibility study on the proposed reforms for a childminding regulatory and support system.
- 20** Support the development of a model for estimating and planning for the supply and demand of childminding services within the context of the wider ECEC and SAC sectors.

Appendices

A	The Working Group
B	Select bibliography
C	Acronyms and abbreviations
D	Reference documents

A The Working Group

Childminding Ireland	<i>Bernadette Orbinski Burke (Chair)</i>
DCYA Early Years Unit	<i>Variously Mary Hogan, Michael Keenan, Hazel O'Byrne and Ronan McCabe</i>
Better Start	<i>Yvonne Kelly</i>
Childcare Committees Ireland	<i>Treasa Quigley</i>
Children's Rights Alliance	<i>Liz Kerrins</i>
Tusla, Early Years Inspectorate	<i>Breda Cloney</i>
Pobal	<i>Liz Kennedy</i>
Childminders' Representative	<i>Mary Walsh</i>
Academic Representative	<i>Miriam O'Regan</i>
NVCC	<i>Heino Schonfeld</i>

The Working Group was supported throughout by Alan Padden, DCYA

B Select bibliography

- Acts of the Oireachtas. Child Care Act, 1991, Pub. L. No. 17/1991 (1991). Retrieved from <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/i19911en/jactipub/0017/print.h1ml>
- Acts of the Oireachtas. (2012). National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act, (47), 1–33. Retrieved from <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/pdf/2012/en.act.2012.0047.pdf>
- Algava, É., & Ruault, M. (2003). Les assistantes maternelles : une profession en développement. Retrieved from <http://drees.solidarites-sante.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/er232.pdf>
- Ang, L., Brooker, E., & Stephen, C. (2016). A Review of the Research on Childminding: Understanding Children’s Experiences in Home-Based Childcare Settings. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 45(2), 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-016-0773-2>
- Bauters, V., & Vandenbroeck, M. (2017). Bauters & Vandenbroeck The professionalisation of family day care in Flanders France and Germany. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2017.1308164>
- Boogaard, M., Bollen, I., & Dijkers, L. (2013). Gastouderopvang in West-Europese landen. Retrieved from www.kohnstammstituut.uva.nl
- Burchinal, M., Howes, C., & Kontos, S. (2002). Structural predictors of child care quality in child care homes. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 17(1), 87–105. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0885-2006\(02\)00132-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0885-2006(02)00132-1)
- Central Statistics Office. (2017). CSO Quarterly National Household Survey Component on Childcare2017.
- Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education. (2006). Síolta. The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education, (April), 1–19.
- Clarke-Stewart, K. A., Vandell, D. L., Burchinal, M., O’Brien, M., & McCartney, K. (2002). Do regulable features of child-care homes affect children’s development? *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 17(1), 52–86. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0885-2006\(02\)00133-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0885-2006(02)00133-3)
- Corrigan, C. (2000). OECD Thematic Review of Background Report. *OECD*. Retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/ireland/34431749.pdf>
- Dalli, C., White, E. J., Rockel, J., Duhn, I., Buchanan, E., Davidson, S., ... Wang, B. (2011). *Quality early childhood education for under-two-year-olds : What should it look like ? A literature review*.
- Daly, M. (2010). *An evaluation of the impact of the National Childminding Initiative on the quality of childminding in Waterford City and County. Waterford City & County Childcare Committees, and Health Service Executive South*.
- DCYA. (2008). *National Guidelines for Childminders*. Retrieved from http://www.dcy.gov.ie/viewdoc.asp?fn=/documents/Publications/National_Guidelines_for_Child_minders_Revised_August_2008.pdf
- DCYA. (2013). Right From the Start: Report of the Expert Advisory Group on the Early Years Strategy, (September), 137. Retrieved from <http://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/policy/RightFromTheStart.pdf>
- DCYA. (2014). Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures: The National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020.
- DCYA. (2016) CHILD CARE ACT 1991 (EARLY YEARS SERVICES) REGULATIONS 2016, 1991 Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

- DCYA. (2017a). *Action Plan on School Age Childcare*. Retrieved from <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/Action-Plan-On-School-Age-Childcare.pdf>
- DCYA. (2017b). *Affordable Childcare Scheme Heads of Bill and General Scheme*. Retrieved from <https://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/legislation/20170126ACSHeadsOfBillandGenScheme.pdf>
- DJELR. (2000). *National Childcare Strategy*.
- Doherty, G., Forer, B., Lero, D. S., Goelman, H., & LaGrange, A. (2006). Predictors of quality in family child care. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 21*(3), 296–312. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2006.07.006>
- Fauth, R., Jelacic, H., Leo, J., Wilmott, N., & Owen, S. (2011). *Childminding practice in England, Final report, (258825)*, 141.
- Fitzpatrick Associates. (2007). *Value for Money Review of the Equal of Opportunities Report Childcare Programme Final Report*.
- Goodbody Economic Consultants. (2011). *Children 2020 : Cost-Benefit Analysis, (November)*.
- Govt of Ireland. (2015). *Report of Inter-Departmental Working Group: Future Investment in Childcare in Ireland*. Retrieved from <https://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/earlyyears/20150722IDGReportonEarlyYrsInvestmentReport>
- Halling-Illum, K., & Breuer, D. (2009). *Family day-care in Denmark*. Childcare Education Services Sector, Danish Trade Union FOA – Trade and Labour. Retrieved from www.foa.dk
- Harper Browne, C. (2009). *Almost Like Family : Family Child Care. Center for the Study of Social Policy*.
- Hayes, N. (2007). Perspectives on the relationship between education and care in early childhood: A research paper. *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework, 1–25*.
- Kontos, S., Howes, C., Shinn, M., & Galinsky, E. (1995). *Quality in Family Child Care and Relative Care. Early Childhood Education Series. Early Childhood Education Series*. Teachers College Press. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED390536>
- Laevers, F., Buyse, E., Daems, M., & Declercq, B. (2016, January 1). *Welbevinden en betrokkenheid als toetsstenen voor kwaliteit in de kinderopvang. Implicaties voor het monitoren van kwaliteit. BKK*. Retrieved from <https://lirias.kuleuven.be/handle/123456789/572800>
- Lanigan, J. D. (2011). Family Child Care Providers’ Perspectives Regarding Effective Professional Development and Their Role in the Child Care System: A Qualitative Study. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 38*(6), 399–409. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-010-0420-2>
- Letablier, M.-T., & Fagnani, J. (2009). EUROPEAN ALLIANCE FOR FAMILIES European Expert Group on Demography Best Practice Meeting on Child care by Child minders in France Childminders in the French Childcare Policy.
- Lloyd, E., & Penn, H. (2010). Why do childcare markets fail? *Public Policy Research*.
- McGinnity, F., Murray, A., & McNally, S. (2013). *Growing Up in Ireland • MOTHERS’ RETURN TO WORK AND CHILDCARE CHOICES FOR INFANTS IN IRELAND • REPORT 2*.
- McGinnity, F., Russell, H., & Murray, A. (2015). *Growing Up in Ireland National Longitudinal Study of Children NON-PARENTAL CHILDCARE AND CHILD COGNITIVE OUTCOMES AT AGE 5 REPORT 6 Growing Up in Ireland NON-PARENTAL CHILDCARE AND CHILD Results from the Growing Up in Ireland Infant Cohort*.
- Melhuish, E. (2016). *Provision of quality early childcare services*. Luxembourg: Publication Office of the European Union.
- Melhuish, E., Gardiner, J., & Morris, S. (2017). *Study of Early Education and Development (SEED): Impact Study on Early Education Use and Child Outcomes up to Age Three*. Retrieved from [https://e-space.mmu.ac.uk/618814/1/Study of Early Education and Development \(SEED\)- Impact](https://e-space.mmu.ac.uk/618814/1/Study%20of%20Early%20Education%20and%20Development%20(SEED)-%20Impact)

- Study on Early Education Use and Child Outcomes up to Age Three Research report.pdf
- National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). (2009). Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework, 59. Retrieved from www.ncca.ie
- OECD. (2012). Doing Better for Families. *Www.Oecd.Org*, 67.
<https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264098732-en>
- Planning & Development Regulations. (2001). Planning and Development Regulations. *PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS*. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004>
- Porter, T., Paulsell, D., Grosso, P. Del, Avellar, S., Hass, R., & Vuong, L. (2010). A Review of the Literature on Home-Based Child Care: Implications for Future Directions. *Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.*
- Start Strong. (2012). Childminding : Regulation and recognition, (October), 1–4.
- Tonyan, H. A., & Nuttall, J. (2014). Connecting cultural models of home-based care and childminders' career paths: an eco-cultural analysis. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 22(1), 117–138. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669760.2013.809654>
- Urban, M., Vandenbroek, M., Lazzari, A., Peeters, J., & van Laere, K. (2011). Competence Requirements in Early Childhood Education and Care (CoRe) Background.
- Wenger, E. (1998). Community of Practice: a Brief Introduction. *Learning in Doing*, 15(4), 1–7.
<https://doi.org/10.2277/0521663636>

C Timeline

	Regulation and registration (incl. child protection and safeguarding)	Quality supports (standards, training, quality development)	Funding and financial supports (parents and childminding services)	Implementation	Targets and milestones
2018 Short Term	<p>Develop wording of amendment to Child Care Act 1991 (DCYA, Tusla)</p> <p>Develop Minimum Regulatory Standards (DCYA, DES, Tusla)</p> <p>Develop Always Children First Training for childminders.</p> <p>Resource and extend ACF training to Childminders (DCYA)</p> <p>Develop inspection sampling protocol and tools</p>	<p>Commence development of quality standards (DCYA, DES)</p> <p>Review QQI Accredited Childminding Practice Level 5 Minor Award for delivery (DCYA, DES)⁶⁹.</p> <p>Resource delivery of Local First Aid courses.</p> <p>Develop Learner Fund model to support childminder training</p>	<p>Review and deliver Childminding Development Grants (DCYA)</p> <p>Prepare for Childminders' Inclusion in Early Years Capital Grants Scheme (DCYA)</p>	<p>Establish an appropriately resourced Childminding National Office (DCYA)</p> <p>Establishment of Sub groups of specialists/relevant agencies.</p>	<p>Amendments to Child Care Act 1991</p> <p>Delivery of CDG</p> <p>Extension Capital Development Grants to Childminders</p> <p>Learner Fund or similar model available to Childminders</p> <p>Review of QQI Accredited Childminding Practice Level 5 Minor Award</p>
2019		<p>Recruit CMSOs to support childminding sector re training, regulation etc.</p> <p>Develop Childminding Networks in line with National Strategy</p>	<p>Childminder Strand in Capital Grants Scheme (DCYA)</p>	<p>Develop 10-year National Childminding Strategy and Implementation Plan (DCYA)</p> <p>Develop Childminding Communication Strategy (DCYA). Resources in place for regional and local delivery of training (DCYA)</p>	<p>10-year Childminding Strategy and implementation plan</p> <p>QQI Accredited Level 5 Childminding Practice Component delivered nationwide following consultation with ETBs</p>
2020	<p>Recruit and train Childminding Inspectors TUSLA</p>	<p>Develop new childminder QQI level 5 components in Business Practice and Mixed Age Childcare</p> <p>Review and revise other QQI level 5 components as needed</p>	<p>Childminders Strand in Capital Grants Scheme (DCYA)</p>	<p>Review all qualitative, regulatory and educational reforms to ensure all are meeting needs of sector are robust and fit for purpose.</p>	<p>First review of childminding reforms completed.</p>

⁶⁹ The minor Level 5 Childminding Practice Award would need to be reviewed with a view to establishing if it can be a stand-alone component or other Level 5 components may need to be reviewed in tandem to ensure a coordinated and robust approach to childminding requirements and qualifications.
Lead agency in Bold

2021 Mid Term	Enact minimum Regulatory requirements Developed Register (Tusla) Commence Inspections (Tusla)	Increase resources to offer further QQI Level 5 childcare components to childminders (DCYA, DES) Further develop local childminders' networks to offer childminder CDP Ongoing supports for Childminders to achieve required training requirements and CPD	Childminders eligible providers of Affordable Childcare Scheme Review tax treatment of childminders (DCYA, Revenue)	Develop regional structures for supervision of Childminding Support workers	Minimum Regulatory requirements enacted Register developed Mandatory registration infrastructure in place Registration and Inspections commenced Registered childminders offering ACS. Childminders availing of accredited training to required standard as per Childminding Strategy. Eligible Childminders availing of mainstream Early Years Funding streams
2022		Develop further childminder components at QQ1 level 5 Ongoing supports for Childminders to achieve required training requirements and CPD			Eligible Childminders availing of mainstream Early Years Funding streams
2023		Ongoing supports for Childminders to achieve required training requirements and CPD		Reviews of qualitative, regulatory and educational reforms to ensure all are meeting needs of sector are robust and fit for purpose	Eligible Childminders availing of mainstream Early Years Funding streams Second review of reforms completed
2024 Long Term	Recruit and train additional Childminding Inspectors as needed TUSLA	Recruit additional Childminding Support workers as needed(DCYA) Ongoing supports for Childminders to achieve required training requirements and CPD			Eligible Childminders availing of mainstream Early Years Funding streams

2025	<p>Review and revise Síolta/Aistear CPD (DES, DCYA)</p> <p>Ongoing supports for Childminders to achieve required training requirements and CPD</p>	<p>Eligible Childminders availing of mainstream Early Years Funding streams</p>	
2026	<p>Ongoing supports for Childminders to achieve required training requirements and CPD</p>		
2027	<p>Ongoing supports for Childminders to achieve required training requirements and CPD</p>	<p>Reviews of qualitative, regulatory and educational reforms to ensure all are meeting needs of sector are robust and fit for purpose</p>	<p>Third review of Childminding system completed</p>

D Supporting documents

In parallel with this report, the Working Group is making available a number of supporting documents that it drew on in the course of drafting the report. These are collected in *Pathway to a quality support and assurance system for childminding, Volume 2: Supporting documents*.

That volume contains the following documents:

- ▶ *Consultation*: an overview of our consultations with children, parents and childminders.
- ▶ *Childminding in Western Europe: an inventory of best practice* – this is a study from a team of researchers in the Netherlands who analysed childminding across seven European countries. It looks at issues such as child protection, health and safety; financial management; and childcare quality.
- ▶ *Regulation of childminding in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales*: these papers look at the impact regulation in our nearest neighbours.
- ▶ Results of a survey on parents and guardians experience of, and opinions on, childminding in Ireland 2017 by Fionnuala Ní Mhórdha. This paper presents the results of a survey commissioned by the Working Group. The survey forms are included here too.