



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



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

National Action Plan for Childminding 2021 – 2028

Second Annual Progress Report 2023

April 2024

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

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1. Introduction

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

This is the second annual progress report, covering the period January – December 2023, which forms part of Phase 1 of the NAPC. Phase 1 began in April 2021 and is due to end in autumn 2024 when childminding-specific regulations come into effect and registration opens to all childminders.

2. Overview of the work of the Steering Group

The Steering Group meets at least quarterly, as set out in its terms of reference. Due to the workload in 2023 the Steering Group met seven times.

In line with the commitments in the National Action Plan for Childminding (NAPC), the key actions of the Steering Group in the second year of Phase 1 of the implementation of the NAPC included:

- Reviewing and providing feedback on the regulation proposals developed by the Regulation and Inspection Advisory Group, and then agreeing draft regulations for the purpose of public consultation.
- Reviewing the content of the draft Pre-Registration Training Programme for Childminders.
- Approving recommendations for changes in the Childminding Development Grants that had been proposed by the Funding and Financial Supports Advisory Group.
- Approving a proposal from the Training and Supports Advisory Group for a transition period, to allow childminders time to become compliant with the regulations before they become mandatory.
- Reviewing and providing feedback on the draft Communication and Engagement Strategy developed by Drury Communications in conjunction with the Department and stakeholders.
- Approving the development of a plan for the public consultation on the draft childminding regulations, as well as draft documentation for the public consultation, including an easy read summary and an online consultation survey.

The minutes of the meetings of the Steering Group are published on the Department's website [here](#) or by going to www.gov.ie and clicking on Latest news, information and upcoming events.

3. Overview of the work of the Advisory Groups

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

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

Each Advisory Group has at least three childminders represented, and the meetings are held in the evenings to facilitate their attendance. The membership lists of the Advisory Groups and the Steering Group can be found in Appendix 1.

Funding and Financial Supports Advisory Group

The Funding and Financial Supports Advisory Group met on three occasions in 2023. The Advisory Group developed proposals for reform of the Childminding Development Grants, preparing recommendations for the Steering Group, which included proposals to offer successful applicants 75% of the approved funding in advance of expenditure. The documentation for the Childminding Development Grants were finalised and launched. The changes recommended by the Advisory Group and approved by the Steering Group resulted in a 62% increase in applications from 2022. The Advisory Group reviewed the success of the 2023 process and made recommendations for further improvements to the grant process for 2024.

Training and Supports Advisory Group

The Training and Supports Advisory Group convened six meetings in 2023.

The group reviewed the pre-registration training and its potential learning outcomes. They approved a recommendation to the Steering Group to change the focus of the training to the new regulations and the registration process. To accommodate this narrower focus for the initial training, they proposed that support in relation to quality practice would be built into the Quality Development Programme (QDP) that childminders will be required to take after registration in order to remain registered.

The Group began work on developing the QDP. In order to build the recognition of prior learning into the QDP, a set of training guidelines/standards is being developed to underpin the course development. The Advisory Group will continue to advise on the standards as they are developed.

Stakeholder Engagement, Consultation and Communication Advisory Group

The Stakeholder Engagement, Consultation and Communication Advisory Group met three times in 2023. The Advisory Group held a communications workshop with Drury to inform the Engagement, Communication and Consultation Strategy. Drury then later brought the draft strategy to the Group for strength testing before putting it to the Steering Group.

The Advisory Group reviewed the Consultation Elements Proposal and the Consultation Communications Plan before submission to the Steering Group for approval.

Regulation and Inspection Advisory Group

The Regulation and Inspection Advisory Group met six times in 2023. The group finalised their regulatory proposals to the Steering Group under the headings:

- Security
- Emergency back-up persons
- Care and development of the child
- Equipment and materials
- Farm safety

The group reviewed a proposal for the Steering Group that a transition period be put in place to allow childminders to become familiar and comply with regulations before registration becomes mandatory. The Advisory Group also reviewed the draft regulations before they were presented to the Steering Group.

4. Consultations with Childminders

In 2023 consultation with childminders continued with a survey on the updated Childminding Development Grants.

All childminders currently engaged with the City and County Childcare Committees were surveyed, regardless of whether or not they had applied for the Grant in 2023. The survey was issued at the end of the funding process, to give childminders the opportunity to reflect on all aspects of the application process. The Funding and Financial Supports Advisory Group reviewed the responses in order to inform their recommendations for the grant criteria in 2024.

Work began on another important milestone in the implementation of the National Action Plan for Childminding 2021 – 2028 in late 2023. Preparation took place for the public consultation on the draft regulations, which was due to begin in early 2024. A comprehensive plan was drawn up to guide the process, including both the communications and the consultation elements. This was presented to the Steering Group for approval. To facilitate engagement with as many stakeholders as possible, the draft regulations are being presented in different formats including an easy read summary, as it was recognised that the legal language of regulations can be a barrier to engagement.

5. Training programmes

Before registering with Tusla, childminders will have to complete a pre-registration training programme. Work began on developing the programme in 2022. However, as the development of the draft childminding regulations began and following consultation with childminders, it became apparent that the initial proposed focus of the what was termed a 'foundation' training programme in the NAPC would need to change. The Steering Group agreed that the training programme would need to benefit both long established and new childminders and make sense as a mandatory training programme to be completed prior to registration. A review of the content of the programme was undertaken and a proposal developed for a pre-registration training programme that would focus specifically on guiding childminders through the regulations and the registration process. The training programme would be designed to help support childminders to understand and comply with the regulations and prepare the necessary documentation to proceed with Tusla registration. As registration with Tulsa under the new regulations will be new to all childminders, a pre-registration training programme will be of benefit to all childminders whether they are new to the profession or long-established.

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

Budget 2024

The New Development Measure funding of €3 million in 2024, will be used for the Tusla EYI to register and inspect childminders. It will provide for an increase in staff in the registration and Garda vetting teams to allow for the increase in numbers when childminders begin to register. It will also allow for a new childminding inspection team to be established to inspect against the newly developed childminding regulations, ensuring that the inspections are proportionate and appropriate to the family and home setting.

Budget 2024 also delivers on the National Action Plan for Childminding commitment to open the NCS to childminders at the earliest possible opportunity, following the introduction of new childminder-specific regulations and the opening of registration to childminders from autumn 2024.

Childminding Development Officers

The Childminding Development Officer (CMDO) team continued to develop and expand during 2023. The CMDOs are employed by the City / County Childcare Committees (CCCs) to provide support services to all childminders at local level. Funding secured in Budget 2023 allowed for more CCCs to employ CMDOs, going from 12 to 18 FTEs ensuring that every CCC had access to a CMDO on a half-time basis and no CMDO was required to support more than 2 CCCs. The aim was to have sufficient funding to allow each CCC to have a full or half time (population dependent) CMDO post and additional funding secured in Budget 2024 will ensure that target is met in 2024. This support will be vital as the end of Phase 1 and the registration of childminders approaches in 2024.

The Childminding Development Officers continued to develop their direct support to childminders. Many CCCs facilitated first aid training and 133 childminders were trained in 2023. The Business Bytes information workshops, developed in 2022, continued to be used with groups and to support individual childminders. 279 childminders were supported with their business needs with “how to set fees” the most popular workshop, followed by “registering with Revenue”. As people continue to show interest in setting up as a childminder, 133 childminders availed of the “Becoming a Childminder” training. CCCs continued to promote childminding as a professional career at job fairs and third level career days.

The Childminding Development Officers worked on an action research project with the University of Galway, testing the development of staffed local networks in an Irish context.

With the changes in the Childminding Development Grant in 2023, 110 childminders were supported in making an application.

Over the last year, the CMDO team have seen the number of childminders engaged with the CCCs rise from 1,091 in September 2022 to 1,125 in December 2023.

Appendix 1

Membership of working groups

Steering Group

Name	Organisation
Martina McGovern	Better Start
Treasa Quigley	CCC Childminding Lead
Áine Brummell	Childcare Committees Ireland
Becky Sullivan Lynch	Childminder
Sinéad Moran	Childminder
Bernadette Orbinski Burke	Childminding Ireland
Julie Ahern	Childrens' Rights Alliance
Michelle Grant	Childminding Development Officer
Anne-Marie Brooks (Chair)	DCEDIY
Toby Wolfe	DCEDIY
Karen O'Sullivan	DCEDIY, National Childminding Coordinator
Marc Bailie	Dept. Health, Northern Ireland
Clare Downey ¹ Margaret Bolger	National Parents' Council
Graeme McAlister	Scottish Childminding Association
Fiona McDonnell	Tusla

¹ Represented the National Parents Council up to and including the September meeting

Regulation and Inspection Advisory Group

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

Training and Supports Advisory Group

Name	Organisation
Ann Lane	Better Start
Treasa Quigley	CCC Childminding Lead
Carol Dillon ² Adrienne Doyle	Childcare Committees Ireland
Rebecca Gregg	Childminder
Sue Mahon	Childminder
Nathalie Duffy Saive	Childminder
Mary Donnelly	Childminder/Childminding Ireland
Rachael Ryan	Childminding Development Officer
Karen O'Sullivan	DCEDIY, National Childminding Coordinator
Fiona Fay	Dublin and Dún Laoghaire ETB
Ann Fanning	ETB Ireland
Barbara Kelly	QQI
Fiona Collins	Tusla

Stakeholder Engagement, Consultation and Communication Advisory Group

Name	Organisation
Treasa Quigley	CCC Childminding Lead
Aileen Kelliher	Childcare Committees Ireland
Thamzen Byrne	Childminder
Betsy Kehoe	Childminder
Tara Collins	Childminder
Ger Galvin	Childminder/Childminding Ireland
Orla McKeon	Childminding Development Officer
Karen O'Sullivan	DCEDIY, National Childminding Coordinator
Clare Downey ³ Rob Walpole ⁴	National Parents' Council
Helen Rouine	Tusla

² Represented CCI until June

³ Represented National Parents Council up to and including September meeting

⁴ Interim National Parents Council representative

Funding and Financial Supports Advisory Group

Name	Organisation
Treasa Quigley	CCC Childminding Lead
Assumpta O'Neill ⁵ Yvonne Broderick	Childcare Committees Ireland
Caroline O'Grady	Childminder
Aisling McCaughey	Childminder
Camilla Wynne	Childminder
Cornelius Collins	Childminder/Childminding Ireland
Denise Quinlan	Childminding Development Officer
Matthew Duffy	DCEDIY
Karen O'Sullivan	DCEDIY, National Childminding Coordinator
Clare Downey ⁶ Rob Walpole ⁷	National Parents' Council
Andrew Mulkeen	Pobal

⁵ Represented CCI up to and including the April meeting

⁶ Represented National Parents Council up to and including the April meeting

⁷ Interim National Parents Council representative

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