Supporting Decent Work and Economic Growth through

First 5

A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families 2019-2028

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Overview

- Background to First 5
- Development of First 5
- Vision for Early Childhood
- Goals, Objectives and Building Blocks
- Key Actions relating to SDG Goal 8

Evidence-Informed Government Policy

- The **antenatal to age five** phase is the most critical period in life.
- **Links between health in adulthood and early childhood experiences**.
- **Home and family** have the biggest impact (plus community, health services, and Early Learning and Care (ELC) settings)
- **Strong economic rationale for investment** in the early years of life.
- Requires a suite of **multidimensional initiatives** and policies relating to, eg:-
  - employment,
  - education,
  - social welfare,
  - health,
  - housing.

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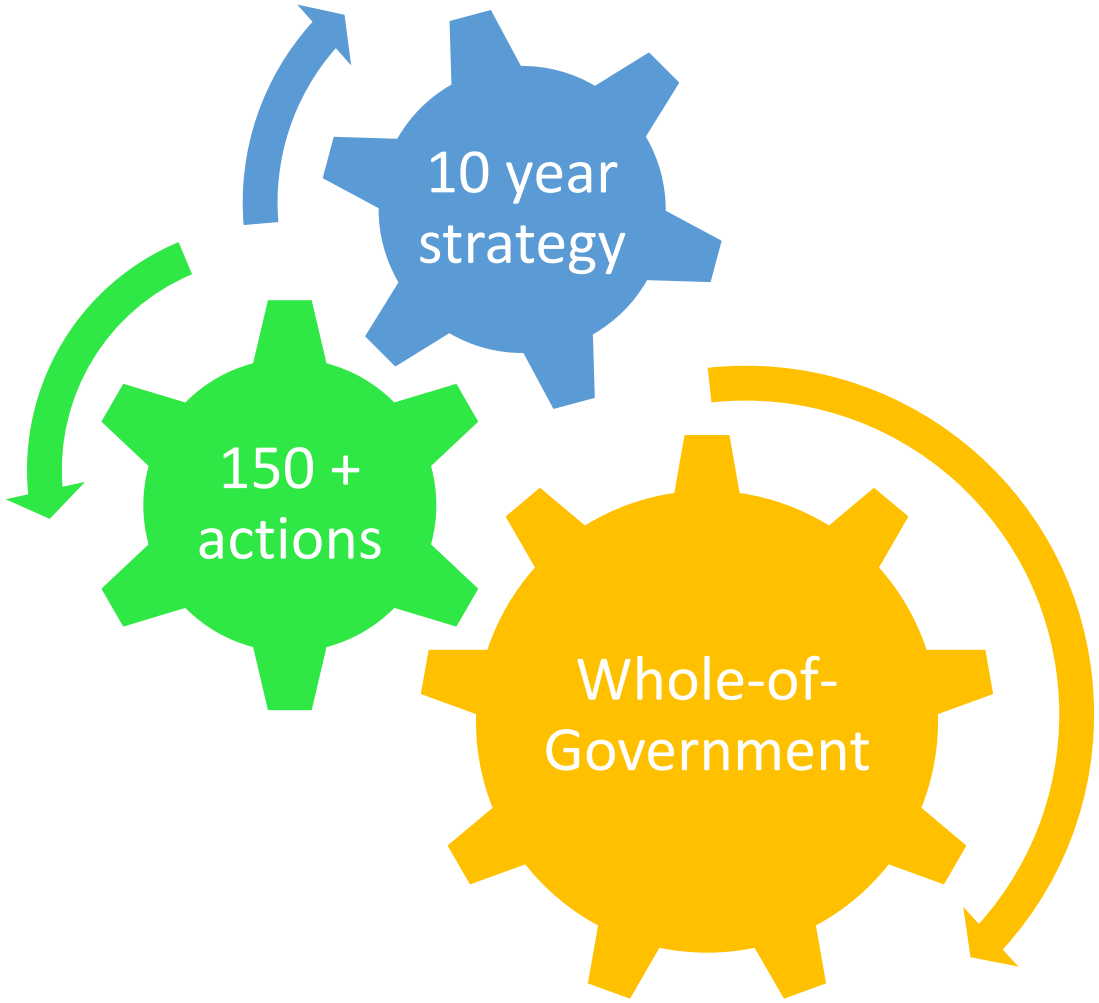
- Strategy for babies, young children and their families in antenatal to age 5 age range
- Launched by Taoiseach Nov 2018
- Implementation Plan published May 2019
  - Identifies outputs and annual milestones for each action for 2019, 2020 and 2021
  - Biannual updates, annual reporting
- Supported by Inter-Departmental Group



Inputs from stakeholders

- Inter-Departmental Group and multiple bilaterals with Gov Depts.
- Recommendations of expert independent group (*Right from the Start* Report)
- Consultation with 3-5 year old children
- Open Policy Debates:- December 2016, June 2018
- Meetings with, for eg:-
  - BOBF Advisory Council and Consortium,
  - Children and Young People Services Committee Steering Group
  - Early Years Forum
- Written submissions

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All babies' and young children's early years will be valued as a critical and distinct period which should be enjoyed.

Families will be assisted and enabled to nurture babies and young children and support their development, with additional support for those who need it.

Those providing services for babies, young children and their families will be equipped to contribute to their learning, development, health and wellbeing.

Community contexts will help babies and young children make the most of their early years and fulfil their potential.

First 5 4 Goals

A	B	C	D
Strong and Supportive Families and Communities	Optimum Physical and Mental Health	Positive play-based early learning	An effective early childhood system

9 Objectives, 5 Building Blocks

A — Strong and Supportive Families and Communities

1. Balance work and caring
2. Information, services and supports for parents
3. Practical and material resources

B — Optimum Physical and Mental Health

4. Positive health behaviours
5. High-quality health services
6. Positive mental health

C — Positive play-based early learning

7. Positive home learning environment
8. Affordable, high-quality Early Learning and Care
9. Supported transitions

D — An effective early childhood system

1. Leadership, governance and collaboration
2. Regulation, inspection, quality assurance
3. Skilled and sustainable workforce
4. Research, data, monitoring and evaluation
5. Strategic investment

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Supporting Decent Work and Economic Growth

A sample of content from First 5

Balancing Working and Caring

The evidence

- Benefits to children, parents and the economy of policies that allow children to be cared for at home, particularly in 1st year.
- Need to limit the hours that very young children are in Early Learning and Care settings to optimise outcomes.
- Research indicates parents of young children wish to spend more time with their children
- Greater employment flexibility is associated with higher rates of female employment
- Considerable demand for a range of flexible working options among working parents.

Balancing Working and Caring

Facilitate parents to care for their child at home during their first year

Action	Key Output 2021
A new paid parental leave scheme.	Parents each have an individual entitlement to 7 weeks of paid parental leave, which can be taken during their child's earliest years, to potentially allow children to benefit from an additional 14 weeks parental care in their 1st year.

Balancing Working and Caring

Access to family-friendly flexible working

Action	Key Output 2021
Extend provision for unpaid parental leave.	Parents of all children up to the age of 12 are entitled to 26 weeks of unpaid parental leave.
Review existing policies that support family-friendly working and develop guidance and tools to facilitate employers to offer more family-friendly working options.	Employment legislation, culture and practice supports parents to balance working and caring roles.

Affordable, High-Quality Early Learning and Care (ELC)

Evidence

- The benefits of high-quality ELC are both immediate and long-lasting.
- High-quality ELC leads to significantly higher educational attainment and earning
- Children who attended high-quality ELC had better learning and socio-emotional outcomes on entry into primary school.
- ELC allows parents to participate in training and employment. Labour force participation increases family income and reduces the risk of poverty.

Affordable, High-Quality Early Learning and Care

Make high-quality ELC and SAC for babies and young children more affordable.

Action	Key Output 2021
Introduce the **National Childcare Scheme** to publicly subsidise the cost of high-quality regulated ELC and as resources allow, **progressively increase** the number of families eligible for targeted subsidies.	Scheme introduced and one-year review completed.
Develop an appropriate mechanism to **control fees** charged to parents in return for **increased State investment** in affordability and quality.	Fee control mechanisms integrated into development of new funding model.

Affordable, High-Quality Early Learning and Care

Maintain and extend the supply of high-quality publicly subsidised ELC and SAC.

Action	Key Output 2021
Develop and publish a strategic **capital investment plan** to deliver the large-scale capital investment under Project 2040 (€250m).	Strategic approach to capital investment agreed
Research on the ELC needs of parents who work **atypical hours or live in rural communities** and develop recommendations for future action.	Report and recommendations made to support the needs of parents who work atypical hours or live in rural communities.

Affordable, High-Quality Early Learning and Care

Key Building Blocks

Building Blocks	Actions
A Skilled and Sustainable Workforce	Professionalisation target (50% with degrees), Workforce Development Plan, Fund for initial and ongoing training, New standards and guidelines for courses, Professional Regulator, Review of the types of favourable working conditions that could be supported to attract and retain staff.

Affordable, High-Quality Early Learning and Care

Context for Workforce Development

- 26,000 practitioners (up from 17,000 in 2010) and20,000+ childminders
- 2% men
- 22% centre based practitioners are graduates, all have Level 5.
- Pay €12.17 on average per hour (€10.93- €14.99)
- 44% workforce have part-time contracts and 40% seasonal contracts
- Turnover 25% (attrition lower)

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Thank you

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