

Briefing note on Workforce Development Plan (WDP) for Expert Group for the Reform of the Funding Model

1. Purpose of the Workforce Development Plan

First 5 commits to developing ‘a Workforce Development Plan to ensure the appropriate number of ELC [Early Learning and Care] and SAC [School-Age Childcare] staff at all levels in the sector. The Workforce Development Plan will support the achievement of the above targets. The Workforce Development Plan will also set out plans to raise the profile of careers in ELC and SAC, establish a career framework and leadership development opportunities and will work towards building a more gender-balanced and diverse workforce. Consideration will also be given to broader ELC and school-age childcare workforce, including those in inspection, mentoring and training roles and support for those who facilitate practice placements.’

2. Scope of the Workforce Development Plan

The Workforce Development Plan will enable the development of the early learning and care, school-age childcare, and childminding workforce - including both registered centre-based and registered home-based provision - with the goal of developing a graduate-led (50%) workforce by 2028. This workforce includes approx. 30,000 staff working in centre-based services. Additionally, there are up to 19,000 childminders who will be subject to the phased introduction of regulations over the next decade. The Workforce Development Plan will set out role profiles for different roles within the profession, career pathways, and qualifications requirements for the workforce, as well as policy mechanisms to achieve First 5 targets.

The Workforce Development Plan will also give consideration to the broader sector workforce, including those in inspection, mentoring and training roles and support for those who facilitate practice placements.

While the Workforce Development Plan will take into consideration commitments in First 5 in relation to the wider workforce in services for young children and families e.g. in health services (such as the commitment to develop an Early Childhood Workforce Initiative), achievement of such commitments will not form part of the Workforce Development Plan.

3. Timeline of the Workforce Development Plan

The Workforce Development Plan, which is being led by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in close collaboration with the Department of Education and Skills, will be developed in two stages, both of which will be overseen by the Steering Group.

Stage 1, which is expected to take approximately 12 months, for completion by Q2 of 2020, will involve:

- a) Preparation of a core report that sets out: a high-level vision for the workforce for the period 2020-2028, and a pathway for achieving the commitments set out in First 5 in relation to development of the workforce.
- b) Completion of a skills forecast setting out the projected demand and supply of practitioners at different qualification levels over the period 2020-2028, to determine whether supply arrangements are adequate to meet demand.

- c) Determining occupational roles within the workforce, qualification requirements for those roles, and terminology to describe the roles.
- d) Agreement on Terms of Reference and membership of a small number of working groups that during Stage 2 will develop detailed implementation plans in key areas of workforce development.

Stage 2, which will commence either during or at the end of Stage 1, and should be completed by Q2 of 2021, will involve completion of implementation plans by working groups to be specified in Stage 1. The working groups will be tasked with developing implementation plans in a limited number of key areas in which more detailed planning is required. The specification of the working groups will be determined by the Steering Group during Stage 1. Stage 2 working groups may include, for example:

- The development of a national CPD infrastructure.
- Movement towards the introduction of a regulator for the profession.
- Mechanisms for upskilling the workforce (funding, incentives).
- Terms and conditions of employment.

4. Role of the Steering Group

The Steering Group will report to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, who holds policy responsibility for early learning and care and school-age childcare, and who will consult with the Minister for Education and Skills in respect of matters relevant to his complementary responsibility in supporting the quality of education provided in the early learning and care sector and the quality of the education and training programmes available to its workforce. The role of the steering group will be to:

1. Prepare a report by Q2 of 2020 that sets out: a high-level vision for the workforce for the period 2020-2028, and a pathway for achieving the related commitments set out in First 5.
2. Oversee the preparation of detailed implementation plans in key areas of workforce development to support achievement of the high-level vision and pathway set out in the report.
3. Carry out a public consultation both with the sector and with wider stakeholders including parents on the basis of a consultation paper on a high-level vision for the workforce and consult the Stakeholder Group at key milestones in preparation of the Workforce Development Plan.
4. Make recommendations on mechanisms to monitor and review implementation of the Workforce Development Plan over the period 2020-2028.

5. Membership of the Steering, Stakeholder and Technical Groups

Membership of the Steering Group includes representatives from DCYA, DES, DPER, DBEI, Tusla, Higher Education Authority, Pobal, DCU, QQI, Solas, and ECI. The Stakeholder Working Group sits under the Steering Group and its membership consists of a wide range of stakeholders from across the sector, informing the Steering Group of the pertinent issues experienced by its membership, and consulting with its members accordingly.

A Technical Advisory Group to advise the Steering Group on research/data matters will be convened as appropriate with representation from Departmental statisticians and researchers, Pobal, HEA, QQI and other relevant providers of data that may be identified during the course of stages 1 or 2.

6. Schedule of meetings

The Steering Group will meet 10 times by June 2020 with the 4th meeting due to take place on 18th October. The Stakeholder group met most recently on 8th October with the next one scheduled for November and two more in Q1 2020.