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Towards a New Funding Model

Working Paper 5

Approaches to Identifying Children or Settings in Need of Additional
Support

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Glossary

Access and Inclusion Model (AIM)	A model of supports designed to ensure that children with disabilities can access the ECCE programme in Ireland.
Childcare	Broadly used to mean ELC and/or SAC.
Childcare tax credits	See refundable childcare tax credits.
Childcare tax deductions	Reduction in the amount of income subject to tax for childcare expenses.
Childminders	See home-based provision.
Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS)	The approach to addressing and prioritising the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities in primary and secondary schools in Ireland.
Demand-side subsidies	Public subsidies paid directly to parents to reimburse them for childcare expenses. Includes refundable tax credits and tax deductions.
Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)	Programme in Ireland providing free hours of ELC for children aged between 2 years, 8 months and 5 years, 6 months.
Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)	All regulated arrangements to provide care and education for children under compulsory school age, regardless of setting, funding, opening hours or programme content. Includes ISCED 0 and ECEC services without a defined educational component. Also called Early Learning and Childcare (ELC).
Early Learning and Childcare (ELC)	All regulated arrangements to provide care and education for children under compulsory school age, regardless of setting, funding, opening hours or programme content. Includes ISCED 0 and ECEC services without a defined educational component. Also called Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC).
Fees	See provider fees.
Free hours or places	Use of ELC or SAC service free of charge for parents. The resulting costs for free access are typically covered by (government) subsidies.
National Childcare Scheme (NCS)	Scheme in Ireland providing ELC and SAC subsidies for children aged between 24 weeks and 15 years.

Parent-paid fees	Fees paid by parents to providers of ELC and SAC. Also called provider fees.
Provider fees	Prices charged by providers for ELC and SAC. Also called parent-paid fees.
Quality	Characteristics of ELC and SAC which have effects on children's development, learning and wellbeing. Includes process quality (the nature of the daily experiences of children) and structural quality (distal factors that are typically regulated, such as children-to-staff ratio, group size and staff training/education, and create the framework for the experiences of children).
School-Age Childcare (SAC)	Arrangements to provide childcare outside of normal school hours for school-going children, whether provided in formal or home-based settings. This includes before school, after school and school holidays, but excludes weekends.
Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)	Special needs children are those for whom a special learning need has been formally identified because of mental, physical or emotional issues. Also called Additional Needs.
Subsidies	Public funding paid directly to providers in return for provision delivered to eligible children. Also called supply-side subsidies.
Supply-side subsidies	See subsidies.
Teachers (in ELC)	Teachers are contact staff with the most responsibility for a group of children in ELC. They may also be called pedagogues, educators, childcare practitioners, core practitioners or pedagogical staff.
Teachers' aides	See assistants.

Executive Summary

Introduction

As part of the First 5 Strategy to improve outcomes for children in Ireland from birth to age five, a commitment has been made by the Irish Government to at least double public spending on Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) and School-Age Childcare (SAC) in Ireland by 2028.¹ An Expert Group was tasked to deliver a report containing proposals for a new funding model which will help ensure that this additional funding can be used in the best way to deliver safe, high quality, affordable and accessible ELC and SAC. This report is the fifth in a series of working papers delivered by Frontier Economics in the role of Research Partnership to provide research support to the Expert Group.

A key priority of the Expert Group is the development mechanisms to provide targeted support to mitigate the impacts of early disadvantage. This paper reviews how other jurisdictions target disadvantage, both in terms of the characteristics used to identify disadvantaged children and the approaches used to ensure they receive additional support. In total, 38 jurisdictions were reviewed covering 28 EU countries (including the French- and Flemish-speaking regions of Belgium), Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland and the four constituent countries of the United Kingdom. The paper also considers which approaches could be applied in Ireland, given the availability of data and relevant contextual factors. A subsequent working paper will review the level and nature of additional support.

Family and child characteristics used to identify disadvantage

Jurisdictions use a range of family and child characteristics to identify which children should receive additional support. These generally fall into one of five broad categories:

¹ The term ECEC (Early Childhood Education and Care) is widely used in the international literature, but the term ELC (Early Learning and Care) is used here in place of ECEC in the original sources. Where the term ELC is used alone, it does not include SAC. The terms “childcare” or “child care” are widely used in the international literature to mean ELC and SAC and the use of the term “childcare” is maintained from original sources in order to avoid any confusion with the meaning.

- Economic disadvantage, based on a range of measures including family/household earnings, disposable income, wealth, parental unemployment, receipt of government benefits, parents' education and parents' occupation. Thirty-two of the 38 jurisdictions reviewed used at least one of these measures.
- Family composition, including the number of parents in the household, the number of siblings in the household and the number of siblings attending the same ELC setting. Twenty-nine of the jurisdictions reviewed used at least one of these measures.
- Children with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND). All of the jurisdictions reviewed provide some form of support to SEND children.
- Children from an ethnic or regional minority, asylum seekers or migrants, and other children with additional language requirement. Twenty-seven of the jurisdictions reviewed used at least one of these measures.
- Children in extreme need, including those who are geographically isolated or are in foster care, those whose parents are seriously ill, disabled or fleeing violence at home, and those who are known to child protection agencies. Fourteen of the jurisdictions reviewed used at least one of these measures.

Approaches to allocating additional support to children

Targeted support for disadvantaged children can be provided directly to parents or delivered through settings. Allocation via settings can imply additional calculation to “aggregate” individual needs to an overall level of support for each setting. It is useful to consider four broad approaches to allocating support:

- Support is provided directly to parents. This approach generally involves parents sharing information directly with the government, without the involvement of settings.
- Support “follows the child” but is provided to settings. This approach requires that parents share information with both the government and settings.

- Support is allocated to settings based on the collated eligibility of the individual children within each setting. This approach also requires that parents share information with both the government and settings.
- Support is allocated to settings based on the address of the setting. This approach imposes minimal additional data collection requirements.

The relative strengths and weaknesses of each approach are considered using five criteria: targeting efficiency; suitability for the type of support; consistency/responsiveness; administrative burden; and take up.

These criteria suggest a clear distinction between the first two approaches (support paid to parents or support follows the child) and the second two approaches (support allocated to settings based on collated child eligibility or setting address):

- The first two approaches offer greater efficiency in that the support is well targeted to disadvantaged children and minimises the deadweight loss of support going to less-disadvantaged children. They also offer greater responsiveness in the level of support to changing levels of need at the setting level.
- The second two approaches can offer a concentration of support within a number of selected settings, which may be essential for some types of support. They also offer greater consistency over time in support for settings.

Within each pair of approaches, the choice should be informed by the specific nature of the support and trade-offs between targeting efficiency, administrative simplicity and take-up:

- Within the first two approaches, support provided to parents is best able to target disadvantaged children, is administratively simple and may facilitate higher take-up. However, support provided to settings may be more appropriate if the support requires some concentration of resources within the setting (such as specialised sessions) rather than simply aiming to lower costs for the target child.
- Within the second two approaches, support based on collated eligibility may more closely reach the target children and have greater responsiveness to changing need, but support based on the setting address may offer greater consistency (if

neighbourhood statistics are more consistent than setting enrolment), lower administrative costs and greater take-up.

Implementation in Ireland

Each of the four approaches could be implemented in Ireland using existing data, with some exceptions for particular disadvantage characteristics.

- The first three approaches could be implemented using data on disadvantage characteristics and ELC hours collected through the National Childcare Scheme (NCS) and Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) registration processes. The exceptions are information on migration and ethnic minority background, as well as some economic disadvantage and extreme need characteristics, which may need to be collected separately such as through the proposed ELC Online Database project.
- The fourth approach could be implemented by combining setting address information with Small Areas Population Statistics.

In practice, the choice of allocation approach will depend upon the specific nature of the support and the specific trade-offs between efficiency of targeting and administrative simplicity and take-up.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and objectives

As part of the First 5 Strategy to improve outcomes for children in Ireland from birth to age five, a commitment has been made by the Irish Government to at least double public spending on Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) and School-Age Childcare (SAC) in Ireland by 2028. A new funding model is required to help ensure that this additional funding is used in the best way to deliver safe, high quality, affordable and accessible ELC and SAC which meets families' diverse needs. An Expert Group was tasked to deliver a report containing proposals for a new funding model which includes the costs, risks and implementation plans for different options.²

Frontier Economics was appointed as the Research Partnership for this Expert Group to provide research support and advice to the group. This report is the fifth in a series of working papers summarising the evidence in several key areas.

First 5 commits to “develop mechanisms to provide additional support to ELC settings where there are high proportions of children who are at risk of poverty to mitigate the impacts of early disadvantage”. Specifically, it commits to “develop a programme for the delivery of ELC in the context of concentrated disadvantage”, informed by the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) model. This work is being led by the Expert Group convened to develop a new funding model for ELC and SAC.

The aim of this paper is to provide supporting evidence for this element by:

- Critically reviewing approaches used in other jurisdictions to identify children or settings for additional support in the context of ELC and SAC;³ and

² The terms of reference for the Expert Group are available at <https://first5fundingmodel.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Terms-of-Reference-1.pdf>

³ The term ECEC (Early Childhood Education and Care) is widely used in the international literature, but the term ELC (Early Learning and Care) is used here in place of ECEC in the original sources. Where the term ELC is used alone, it does not include SAC. The terms “childcare” or “child care” are widely used in the international literature to mean ELC and SAC and the use of the term “childcare” is maintained from original sources in order to avoid any confusion with the meaning.

- Reviewing relevant data sources in Ireland to assess which approaches could be applied using existing data and which would require additional data analysis or collection.

It is anticipated that a subsequent working paper will review the level and nature of additional support and any conditionality attached to such support. A discussion of these topics is therefore beyond the scope of this paper.

1.2 Methodology and scope

A broad-ranging search was undertaken for evidence on how other jurisdictions identify disadvantaged children. This covered all types of disadvantage including family economic disadvantage and other family and child characteristics which may inhibit early years child development. This broad scope was considered because it offers a range of potential approaches to identify children for any type of targeted ELC and SAC support.

This search covered government, social policy and academic databases, without restrictions on the range of countries or timeframe, although more recent evidence was prioritised.⁴

The search used key relevant phrases in Google Scholar including combinations of:

- “childcare” OR “early education” OR “ECEC” OR “school-aged care” AND
- “disadvantaged” OR “deprived” OR “poor” OR “poverty” OR “inclusion” OR “equality” OR “equal opportunity”

References and weblinks from publications with international reviews were also reviewed. Key international sources included Oberhuemer and Schreyer (2018), European Commission (2019a) and Hufkens and Verbist (2017).

The evidence was analysed in four stages:

- First, evidence was collated on the approaches to identifying children at risk of disadvantage in each jurisdiction. In total, 38 jurisdictions were reviewed covering 28 EU countries (including the French- and Flemish-speaking regions of Belgium),

⁴ Sufficient evidence was available on ELC and SAC that the search was not expanded to cover other types of education, with the exception of the DEIS model.

Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland and the four constituent countries of the United Kingdom.⁵

- Second, a taxonomy of disadvantage characteristics or criteria was developed. For each set of characteristics, we noted specific applications and variations.
- Third, approaches used to allocate funding to children or settings were identified. For each approach, the data requirements and relative advantages and disadvantages were noted, along with any contextual factors which may help facilitate or hinder effectiveness.
- Finally, the administrative and survey data sources that could be used to facilitate the implementation of each approach in Ireland were reviewed and additional primary evidence collection requirements were noted. Ireland-specific contextual factors that would make some approaches more or less effective were also considered.

While the study included both ELC and SAC, the vast majority of the evidence sources focused on approaches for identifying disadvantaged children in the ELC context only. It may be the case that these approaches also apply to SAC, but these are only described in the report if they are explicitly mentioned by the evidence source.

1.3 Caveats on the evidence

It should be noted that the objective of this paper was to provide information on approaches to identify disadvantaged children in the Irish context. This means that:

- The working paper should not be considered as a comprehensive summary of the full set of disadvantage characteristics or allocation approaches used in other countries. The focus was on the use of approaches in European and OECD countries because this evidence may be most relevant for the Irish context.

⁵ The EU and additional OECD countries were reviewed as broadly representative of the span of comparable countries for Ireland.

- The information presented is the most up-to-date evidence identified, but it is possible that current policies may now differ from this. In terms of learning for the Irish case, evidence on mechanisms which are no longer operating is still useful.

Finally, it should be noted that the research for this report was undertaken prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic and that some information may have subsequently changed as a result.

1.4 Report structure

The remainder of this working paper is structured as follows. **Chapter 2** describes the various characteristics used to identify disadvantaged children in other countries. **Chapter 3** describes the approaches used for allocating funding to settings or children to target these characteristics, as well as the data requirements, advantages and disadvantages of each approach. **Chapter 4** sets out how the different approaches could be implemented in Ireland using existing data sources or with new data collection, along with a discussion of Ireland-specific contextual factors which may affect appropriateness.

2. Family and child characteristics used to identify disadvantage

This chapter describes the family and child characteristics used to identify disadvantaged children for the purposes of targeting ELC and SAC support. Section 2.1 presents a high level taxonomy of characteristics and sets out their prevalence across the reviewed countries. Sections 2.2 to 2.6 describe each set of characteristics in turn, drawing out specific examples and notable variations.

2.1 Overview

Targeting support to disadvantaged children generally has two complementary objectives:⁶

- **Improving access:** mechanisms to ensure that disadvantaged children attend ELC. These include targeted fee caps, subsidies, tax credits, prioritised attendance, and home visits or punitive sanctions for non-attendance.
- **Enhanced provision support:** mechanisms to ensure that settings are resourced to provide additional support to disadvantaged children. These include a wide range of measures such as workforce augmentation, training or mentoring, as well as additional funding for facilities, materials, equipment or discretionary purposes.

Countries use a range of family and child characteristics to identify which children should receive additional support. These can be grouped into five broad categories:

- Economic disadvantage
- Family composition
- Children with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND)⁷
- Children from a migration or ethnic minority background

⁶ A detailed discussion of the level, nature and conditionality of additional support is not within the scope of this paper.

⁷ While supporting SEND children is addressed through separate policy mechanisms in Ireland, it is included in this survey because the approaches other countries take to allocating SEND funding to settings are relevant for targeting disadvantaged children.

- Children in extreme need.⁸

Some of these categories (such as family economic disadvantage and composition) may have higher risks of limited access, while other categories (such as children with SEND or from a migration or ethnic minority background) may be more likely to require enhanced provision support.

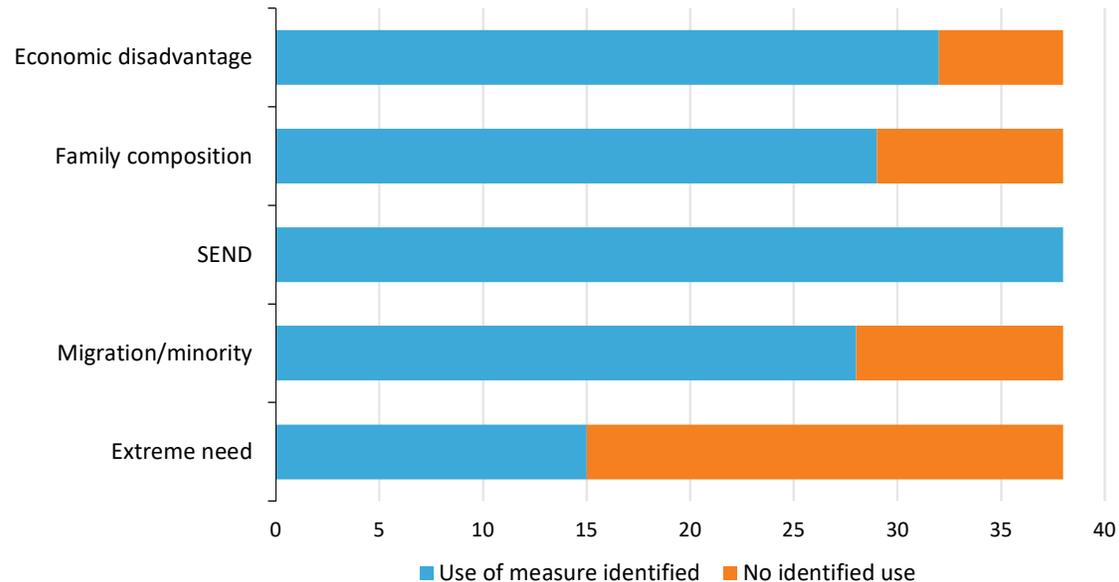
These categories go beyond direct measures of poverty and capture a broader range of characteristics which are related to early disadvantage. This wider scope was considered because it offers a range of potential approaches to identify children for any type of targeted ELC and SAC support.

Figure 1 shows that SEND is the most common measure for identifying disadvantaged children, followed by economic disadvantage with 31 jurisdictions using this measure to target ELC support.⁹ Three-quarters of jurisdictions account for family composition or migration and ethnic minority backgrounds, and over a third have support targeted to children in extreme need.

⁸ This category includes a range of specific types of disadvantage, such as children who are victims of violence; children whose parents are ill; children living in “non-stimulating” conditions; children referred by the social services; children who are homeless; or foster children.

⁹ Limited data was available regarding targeted SAC support.

Figure 1: Number of jurisdictions using characteristic type to target ELC support



Sources: European Commission (2019a) and country-specific sources (see Annex).

Notes: The figure presents the number of jurisdictions where it was identified that the characteristic was used to target ELC support.

A number of caveats should be noted:

- Some countries provide no targeted support to ensure the participation of disadvantaged children because they already offer a universal free ELC or a legal entitlement to ELC for all children. This is the case for Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Romania, Sweden and Norway.
- Some countries have significant variation in the choice of criteria at the regional or local level, notably Canada and Germany.
- Some programmes or measures are available in all types of ELC settings, while others might only apply to public or publicly subsidised establishments.

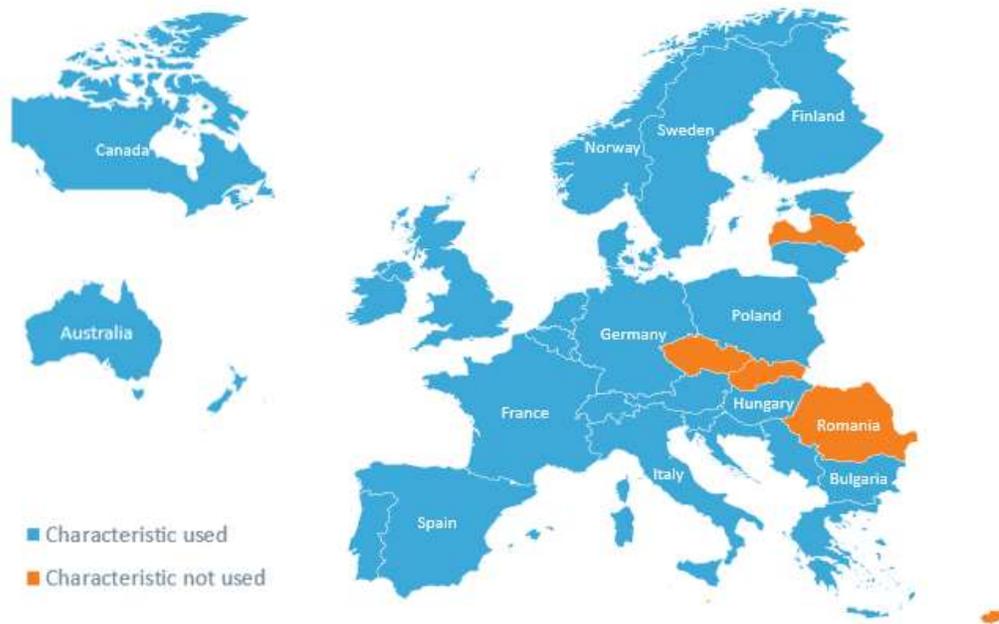
The remainder of this chapter sets out each set of characteristics in turn.

2.2 Economic disadvantage

Economic disadvantage may limit access to ELC and SAC and may also be related to a need for enhanced provision support for children. Several different family characteristics are used to capture economic disadvantage. Of the 38 jurisdictions reviewed, only six did not use

economic disadvantage to target support. Figure 2 shows that these six countries (Cyprus, Czechia, Latvia, Malta, Romania and Slovakia) are concentrated in eastern Europe.¹⁰

Figure 2: Jurisdictions using family economic disadvantage as a criterion



Sources: European Commission (2019a) and country-specific sources (see Annex).

Family income is the most commonly used characteristic for identifying economic disadvantage. There are several variants on how family income is measured:

- Family earnings is the most common measure used to capture income: for example, parent-paid fees and/or subsidies are a function of family earnings in Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Norway, Serbia and Sweden.
- Household earnings: for example, fees are a function of household earnings in the Netherlands and Portugal.

¹⁰ Latvia, Malta and Romania have universal free ELC or a universal legal entitlement to ELC.

- Disposable income: for example, fees for family day care (childminders) are a function of the parents' disposable income in France.

Some jurisdictions use related measures of economic disadvantage:

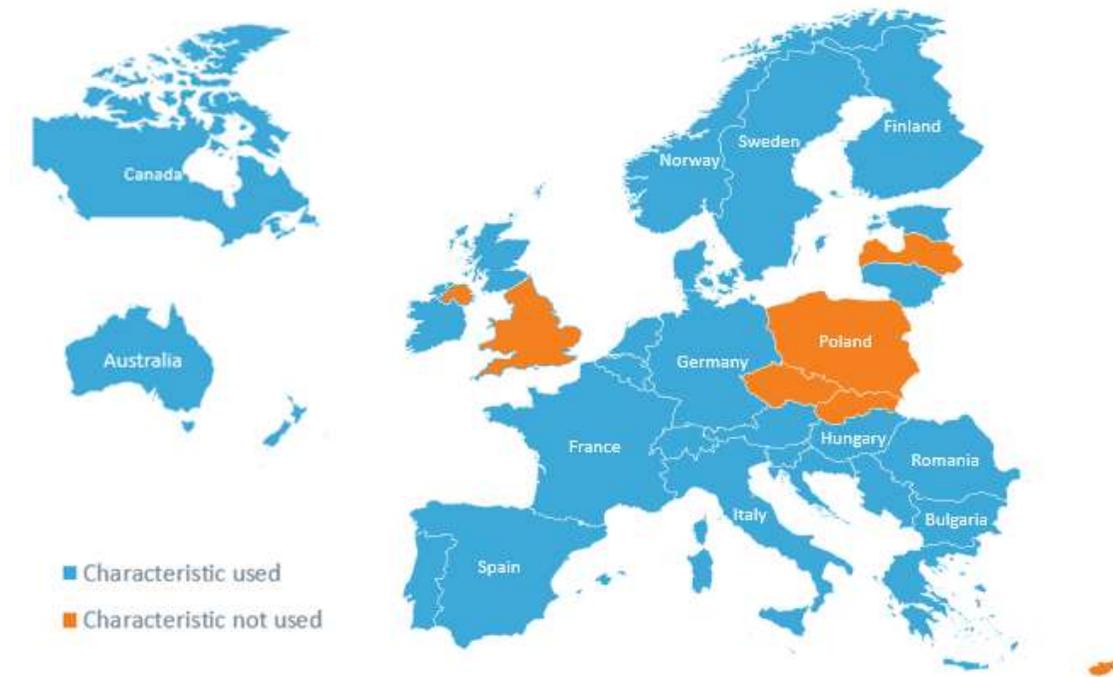
- Wealth: In Slovenia, fees are a function of both family earnings and wealth, with parents ranked into one of nine groupings according to family income and property holdings.
- Parental unemployment: Poland and Sweden target spending on children whose parents are unemployed.
- Receipt of government benefits: In New Zealand, subsidies are directed to children whose parents are in receipt of government benefits. In England and Scotland, some free hours are offered to children on the basis that their parents are in receipt of government benefits. In the Netherlands, participation in a debt restructuring programme is considered in the calculation of fee reductions.
- Parents' education and occupation: In the Netherlands, parents' level of education is considered in the calculation of free reductions. In Australia, spending is targeted using a composite measure that includes parental education and occupation.

2.3 Family composition

Family composition is also a commonly used characteristic for identifying disadvantaged children. Of the 38 jurisdictions, only nine did not account for family composition in targeting ELC and SAC support. Figure 3 shows that these jurisdictions (Cyprus, Czechia, England, Latvia, Malta, Northern Ireland, Poland, Slovakia and Wales) are concentrated in the United Kingdom and eastern Europe.¹¹

¹¹ Latvia and Malta offer universal free ELC or a universal legal entitlement to ELC.

Figure 3: Jurisdictions using family composition as a criterion



Sources: European Commission (2019a) and country-specific sources (see Annex).

Three different measures based on family composition are used:

- Single-parent households: A number of countries, including Australia, Belgium, Croatia, Lithuania and Serbia, offer subsidies for children of single-parent households.
- Number of children in the family: Countries, including Croatia, Finland, England, Ireland, Germany, Lithuania, Serbia and Sweden, target subsidies based on the number of children in the family.
- Number of children in a particular setting: Some countries, including Portugal and Serbia, provide additional government support to families that have more than one child in a particular setting.

These characteristics are most closely related to the affordability of ELC and SAC as the number of children is high relative to parents' earnings (either because there is only one parent or because there is a high number of children). Hence, access is the key challenge for

single-parent families or families with more children requiring ELC or SAC and the reason underpinning targeted support.

Both the number of parents and the number of children in the family may be used as proxies for economic disadvantage. However, some countries combine economic disadvantage support with family composition support. For example, in Belgium and Serbia, children from low income families and single-parent families are offered priority admission, and, in Australia, Croatia, England, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Slovenia and Sweden, both factors are used to calculate fees or fee caps. This implies that many countries use family composition as an indicator of disadvantage independent of income.

2.4 Children with special educational needs or disabilities

Children with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) are often targeted for additional ELC and SAC support both to improve access and to provide enhanced provision support. All of the countries reviewed use SEND as a characteristic for identifying disadvantaged children:

- Fourteen countries offer free hours or fee reductions to children with SEND, including Austria, Canada, Belgium (French speaking), Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Hungary, New Zealand, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales).
- A further ten countries offer priority admission, including Belgium (Flemish speaking), Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Slovenia, Spain and Serbia.
- All countries reviewed provide some combination of setting subsidies, specially qualified support staff or dedicated special education settings to support children with SEND.

Countries use a range of specific criteria for identifying and categorising children with SEND.

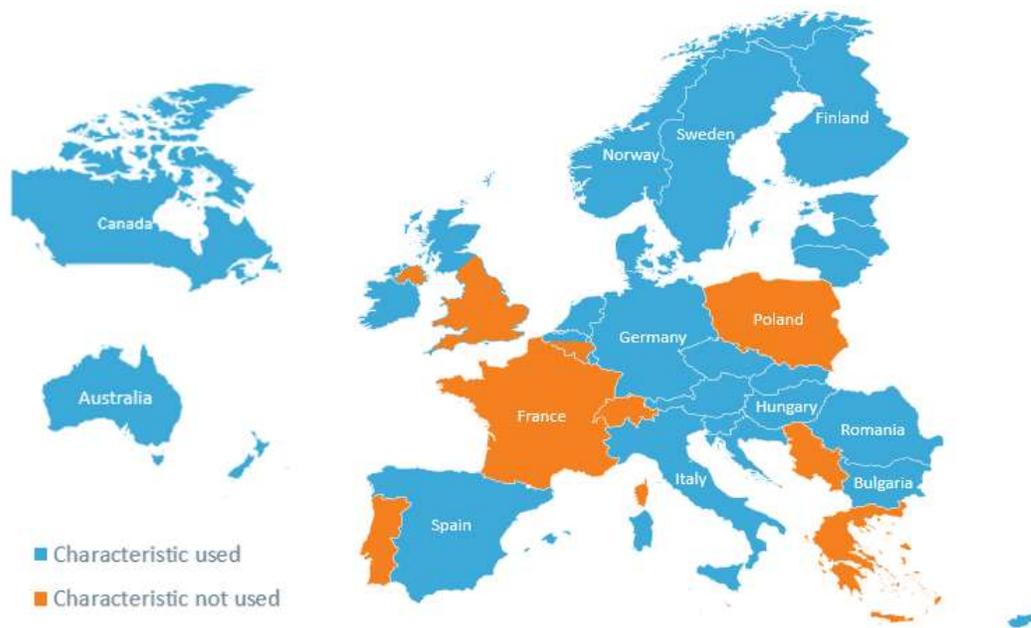
2.5 Children from a migration or ethnic minority background

Another characteristic used to identify disadvantage is whether children have a migration or ethnic minority background. In practice, migration or ethnic minority background are

generally used to identify children whose home language is different to the language of instruction, focusing primarily on a need for enhanced provision support, although these types of families may also be at higher risk of economic disadvantage and require support to access ELC and SAC. For some regional and ethnic minorities (for example Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Australia or Roma children in eastern Europe), targeted support is used to address differences in educational attainment arising from cultural differences which are not specifically embodied in the home language.

Of the 38 countries reviewed, 10, including Belgium (French speaking), France, Greece, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Switzerland and the United Kingdom (England, Northern Ireland, Wales), did not explicitly use ethnic minority status or migration background as a disadvantage characteristic. These countries are highlighted in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Jurisdictions using migration status or ethnicity as a criterion



Sources: European Commission (2019a) and country-specific sources (see Annex).

Notes: Within the UK, only Scotland uses this characteristic. In Belgium, only the Flemish-speaking part uses this characteristic.

Three different types of characteristics are used to identify children in need of additional support.

First, home language is the most commonly used approach. Support is targeted to children whose home language is not the primary language (or one of the primary languages) of instruction in the country. Additional subsidies or language training is provided for such children in Austria, Belgium (Flemish speaking), Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Lithuania and Norway. The specific method to identify children in need of language support is often delegated to municipalities or settings. For example, in Austria, the government uses a language assessment instrument introduced in 2008.

Second, recent immigration from another country (or other areas of the country) is used in some cases to target funding. In practice, this is generally used to identify children in need of language support, such as in Denmark, Germany, Malta and Sweden. Other countries have variations to this measure:

- Children who are asylum seekers or refugees are differentiated from other children who have recently immigrated for additional support in Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg and Norway.
- The length of time that a child has lived in the country is part of its composite measure for determining support in the Netherlands.
- Children who have recently moved to the area, whether from another country or from another part of Germany, are targeted for support through the *Bundesprogramm Kita-Einstieg* in Germany.

Third, many countries offer targeted support for children from regional or ethnic minorities:

- Roma children are offered additional support in many countries, particularly those in eastern Europe (notably in Cyprus, Czechia, Hungary, Latvia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain).
- Children identifying as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, First Nations or Maori are provided targeted support in Australia, Canada and New Zealand.
- Children from regional minorities who speak particular languages at home are offered additional support in several countries, for example in Finland (Swedish speakers receive additional support); Luxembourg (Portuguese speakers receive

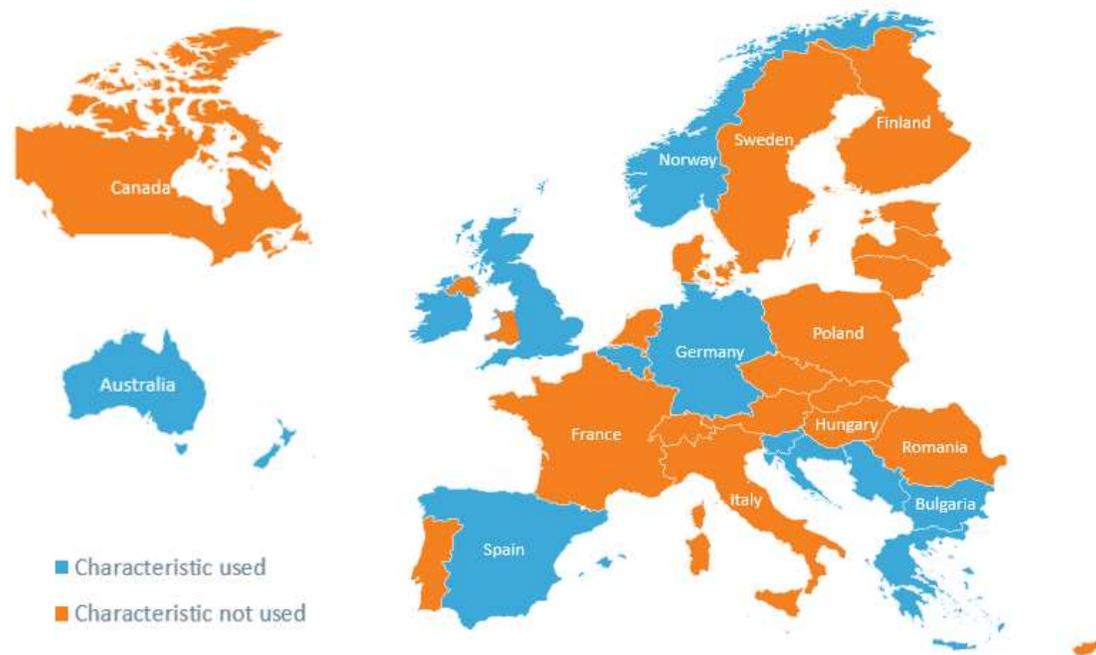
additional support); Slovakia (Hungarian, Ruthenian, Ukrainian and Romani speakers receive additional support); and Slovenia (Italian and Hungarian speakers receive additional support).

2.6 Children in extreme need

The final grouping captures a diverse range of characteristics used to identify disadvantage, sometimes referred to as “children in extreme need”. These children may require enhanced provision support to compensate for challenging home backgrounds.

Fourteen of the 38 countries reviewed were identified as using one or more of these characteristics. Given the broad and diverse range of measures, it is likely that this is not a comprehensive list. Figure 5 highlights the identified cases where the use of measures related to extreme need are used to target additional ELC or SAC support.

Figure 5: Jurisdictions using extreme need as a criterion



Sources: European Commission (2019a) and country-specific sources (see Annex).

The range of measures include:

- Children who live in geographically isolated areas are offered targeted support in Bulgaria and New Zealand.

- Children who are in foster care or otherwise in the care of the government are offered targeted support in Belgium (both French and Flemish speaking), France, Hungary, Slovenia, Serbia and the United Kingdom (England and Scotland).
- Children whose parents are seriously ill or disabled are offered targeted support in Croatia, England, Greece and New Zealand.
- Children who are known to a child protection agency or otherwise at risk of abuse, neglect or domestic violence are offered targeted support in Australia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia and Serbia.
- Children suffering from homelessness and children of teenage parents still in education/training are offered targeted support in Ireland.
- Children of women in shelters fleeing violence at home are offered targeted support in Greece and Spain.

3. Approaches to allocating additional support to targeted children

This chapter describes different approaches to allocating additional ELC and SAC support to the targeted children. Section 3.1 provides an overview of the different approaches and Sections 3.2 to 3.5 describe each approach in greater depth. Section 3.6 considers the strengths and weaknesses of each approach.

Due to the large number of possible examples (each country could have a different approach for each type of target child), this chapter does not provide a comprehensive description of the approaches used by each country, but rather describes examples where appropriate.

3.1 Overview of approaches

Additional support for targeted children can be delivered to parents or delivered through settings. Allocation via settings can require an additional level of calculation in determining how the needs of individual children within the setting are “aggregated” to an overall level of support for each setting. It is useful to consider four broad approaches to allocating support:

- Support is provided directly to parents.
- Support “follows the child” but is provided to settings.
- Support is allocated to settings based on the collated eligibility of the individual children within each setting.
- Support is allocated to settings based on the address of the setting.

3.2 Support provided directly to parents

Some support is provided directly to the parents without any involvement of the setting. This is generally the case for policies supporting access, such as fee caps, tax subsidies and tax credits. For example, income-dependent tax credits or tax deductions to offset some ELC expenses are offered in England, Germany and Spain, while direct ELC subsidies for low income families are provided in Australia and Bavaria and funds for the childcare-related transport costs of children living in isolated areas are provided in Bulgaria.

There are also cases where targeted support for enrolment operates directly through parents. For example, in Denmark, ELC attendance at a setting that offers a language programme is a precondition for certain parents to receive child welfare benefits.

In addition, some disadvantaged children are directly provided with complementary non-ELC programmes such as home educational development support, home language training or parental support (for example in the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland).

Data requirements. For these approaches, it is generally not necessary for the government to know which setting the child attends or for the parent to share information on disadvantage characteristics with the provider. However, parents will still need to share information with the responsible government agency and may need to provide evidence of the number of hours of ELC or SAC the child attends and the amounts paid for ELC or SAC. This process may mean that subsidies are paid as retrospective reimbursements.

3.3 Support “follows the child” but is provided to settings

Some support for disadvantaged children is allocated to individual children, but it is provided to the setting (rather than directly to the families).

Policies aimed at improving access often use this approach:

- Fee control policies and free provision based on family income reduce costs and improve access for parents through funding paid to settings in Belgium (Flemish speaking), Canada, Croatia, Denmark, England, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia and Sweden.
- Priority admission policies exclusively use this approach. For example, municipalities are required to offer priority admission to disadvantaged children in Serbia and Sweden, and settings can receive additional subsidies if they prioritise children from disadvantaged families in Belgium.

Policies for other target groups also use this approach but aim not only to improve access but also to enhance quality and provision support for these children:

- Additional funding is paid in some cases. For example, the per-child subsidy which settings receive is 30% higher for children with a migration background in Bavaria. Funding rates are higher for children with SEND and those with additional language requirements in New Zealand, and funding rates are higher for children from disadvantaged backgrounds or with special needs in the Netherlands.
- Settings or municipalities are required to provide targeted support to SEND children and those with additional language requirements in some cases. The provision of specialist language support is required in Austria, Belgium (French speaking) and Denmark. Professional development for staff that are responsible for children with a migration background is provided in Malta, while higher staff-to-child ratios in settings with regional or ethnic minority children are required in Slovenia. Similarly, additional (often specialist) staff to support SEND children must be employed in Croatia, Czechia, Ireland, Romania and Sweden.

Data requirements: This approach requires that some information is shared by parents with both the government and the setting. How this information is collected and how eligibility is assessed can vary:

- Settings may collect the information from parents and either assess eligibility themselves or pass on the information to the government for assessment. In this case, settings may need help from government to identify which children are eligible for support, particularly for targeted fee controls (where the government may have the parental income data needed to determine fee levels) and for targeted SEND support (where government agencies may have the specialist skills to identify children with special needs).
- Government may collect and assess the information and then use setting details provided by parents to provide the support directly to settings. For some types of support, it may be necessary for the government to inform the setting about which children are eligible for the additional support. Alternatively, the government may give the parents of eligible children some type of voucher of eligibility which can be redeemed by the setting that the parent uses. In both cases, information required to

assess eligibility is only shared with the government, but the setting will know which children are eligible for the additional support.

If municipalities or settings do not actually receive additional support but are required by regulation to offer priority admission or target resources, the government needs only to ensure it has sufficient information from the setting to verify compliance and does not need to have access to child-specific information.

3.4 Support is allocated to settings based on collated child eligibility

Some approaches provide support to settings based on a count or share of children in each setting who meet the given set of eligibility criteria. This approach is generally used where the support can only be given in discrete “chunks” such as for additional staff, training or facilities. Unlike pure funding, this type of support cannot be continuously scaled to allocate a precise amount matched to the number of eligible children. Consequently, this approach differs from the previous approach primarily in that support tends to be provided on a discrete basis, with some settings receiving a uniform level of support if the number or proportion of children passes a specified threshold and other settings receiving no support.

This is the most common approach used to provide targeted support to children with SEND or to children from ethnic minority backgrounds or with additional language requirements.

For example:

- Settings with a high share of children requiring language support employ specially qualified teachers and/or adopt language-focused pedagogies in Germany, Norway and Luxembourg.
- Settings with two or more SEND children must hire an additional specialist staff member in Austria.
- Settings with a concentration of ethnic minority children have posts for specially qualified educators in Hungary.
- Settings with a concentration of migrant children have access to specific resources and software for enhancing reading and writing skills in Malta.

The approach is also used to target support to settings with a high share of economically disadvantaged households. For example:

- Settings where at least 20% of children are disadvantaged (defined as those who have spent the majority of their lives as the dependent of a welfare beneficiary) receive additional funding for every child-hour they provide in New Zealand.
- Some settings with a concentration of disadvantaged children offer special curricula or programmes in Lithuania.

A less common variant of this approach is to allocate support to settings on the basis of a collation of children's home addresses. In this case, the home address of the child is used as a proxy measure to determine eligibility for additional support. Only one example of this variant was identified:

- Additional per-child funding is provided depending on the home addresses of registered children in New Zealand.

Data requirements. The data requirements are almost identical to those for the previous approach: in order to allocate support, the government needs to know the number of children meeting the disadvantage criteria in each setting. As with the previous approach, the information may be collected and eligibility determined by settings or by the government, but the allocation of support will be based on a collation of children's eligibility at the setting level.

3.5 Support is allocated to settings based on the address of the setting

Some policies allocate support based on the address of the setting. Geographic location is used as a proxy for the eligibility of children attending the setting, based on the assumption that local concentrations of disadvantage will be reflected in the enrolment in the setting.

Providing support on the basis of setting address is commonly used to increase access in geographic areas with low attendance. For example:

- Additional funding is provided to settings in areas with comparatively high levels of disadvantage in Australia.¹²
- Additional funding is provided to settings in disadvantaged areas to facilitate additional opening hours and address staff shortages in Munich (Bavaria).
- Some *écoles maternelles* in socially disadvantaged areas are made accessible to younger children and provided with additional funding to reduce staff-to-child ratios in France.¹³
- A range of additional support to primary and secondary schools in disadvantaged areas are provided through the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools programme in Ireland.¹⁴ The Pobal Area Based Childhood programme also targets support to children and families in disadvantaged areas of Ireland.
- Free hours of provision and related support are provided to settings located in disadvantaged areas in Wales.¹⁵

A related set of policies targets settings in isolated areas, which may experience under-provision of ELC. For example:

- A not-for-profit organisation subsidises the establishment of settings in rural areas with low ELC attendance in Poland.¹⁶

¹² Geographic areas are based on the Statistical Area Level 2 classification, with each area having a population of between 3,000 and 25,000 persons (average 10,000).

¹³ Geographic areas are based on *zones d'éducation prioritaire* or *réseaux d'éducation prioritaire*. The size and structure of these areas have evolved since their introduction in 1981, but each area generally constitutes a small number of primary and secondary schools.

¹⁴ Geographic areas are based on the Central Statistics Office Small Areas classification, with each area having a population of 65 to 90 households.

¹⁵ Geographic areas are based on the Lower Super Output Area classification, with each area having an average population of 1,600 persons. Disadvantage was determined using the Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation.

¹⁶ Geographic areas are based on the *Gmnia* classification. Rural *Gminas* have a population of between 1,500 and 24,00 persons. The programme supports 75 settings in 28 *Gminas*.

- Settings in isolated areas are provided with additional funding in New Zealand.¹⁷

Data requirements. There are minimal additional data requirements associated with using setting address to allocate support. Government agencies generally have a record of registered settings, including their address, and only need to combine this with the relevant index of regional disadvantage or isolation.

3.6 Relative strengths and weaknesses of each approach

The relative strengths and weaknesses of each approach are considered using five questions.

(1) How efficient is the allocation approach in reaching the targeted children?

The four approaches vary in the degree to which the support will reach the targeted children:

- The first approach of paying ELC or SAC subsidies directly to parents will perfectly target the support to the identified children.
- The second approach of support following the child to the setting will be perfectly targeted in the case of fee controls or where the support can be specifically allocated to the child. In other cases, the support may be dispersed across children in the setting, but it will still be well targeted on the setting that the child attends.
- The third approach, using a collated measure of eligibility for each setting (typically based on passing a discrete threshold), may not reach all targeted children – excluding those in settings which do not meet the threshold and potentially benefiting non-eligible settings in receipt of support.
- The fourth approach of providing support based on setting address is likely to be the weakest approach for ensuring that the support reaches the targeted children. This approach may miss disadvantaged children who do not live or attend settings in deprived geographies, and may result in support being provided to children who

¹⁷ Isolation is calculated using distance from the nearest town with populations of 5,000, 20,000 and 100,000 persons.

need it less (creating substantial “deadweight loss” of funds failing to reach their intended target). This is particularly likely to be the case where disadvantage is not concentrated geographically. For example, Save the Children Wales (2020) finds that 45% of children living in income deprivation in Wales are not eligible for Flying Start, a programme that provides support on the basis of setting address.¹⁸

(2) Does the allocation approach work well for the type of support?

As noted above, a key distinction between the approaches is that the third and fourth approaches concentrate support within a few selected settings. For some types and levels of support, such concentration may be useful or even essential:

- Concentrating support in a smaller number of settings is generally preferable (and may be essential) if the support is discrete and resources are limited. For example, children with additional language requirements benefit from having a support teacher fluent in their home language, but such resources are expensive and it is efficient to allocate these teachers to settings with high concentrations of such children (as is the case in Luxembourg for the Portuguese language).
- Relatedly, concentrating support may also be appropriate if it involves initial investment costs (upfront costs) such as facilities or infrastructure to support SEND children (for example, building disabled access ramps). Time lags in implementing such initial investments do not work well for support which “follows the child” as the support may not be in place to benefit the specific child. Indeed, this suggests that having “children follow the support”, whereby specific settings make these investments and parents with eligible children can access settings where they are available, may be a more efficient approach.
- A final advantage of concentrating support in a subset of settings is that it allows policy to account for any multiplier or social context effects. Where funding or

¹⁸ Evidence on Children’s Centres in England showed that local authorities had targeted Children’s Centres to locations in more deprived local areas, but the study was unable to identify the extent to which the services were used by deprived families or the extent to which deprived families had access to a centre (Smith et al. 2014).

support is provided individually for each eligible child, no account is taken for whether a concentration of disadvantaged children can magnify educational risks for other children in the same setting. Allocating funding on the basis of collated eligibility allows governments to provide greater support when disadvantage is heavily concentrated.

More broadly, the potential self-reinforcing element of the targeting of support to particular settings (children following the support) could have both benefits and drawbacks. Even if eligible children are not initially concentrated within settings, parents with eligible children may be encouraged to enrol them in settings offering targeted support, while those without eligible children may prefer settings which are not so focused on particular needs. While such sorting might make the delivery of discrete support more efficient, there may be some drawbacks:

- Many of the countries reviewed favour moving children with SEND from specialist settings into mainstream settings, and a concentration of specialist support would frustrate this objective.
- An element of social mixing across levels of economic disadvantage is often considered beneficial for children. Selection across settings supported by a concentration of targeted support would run counter to such mixing.

(3) Does the allocation approach offer the desired degree of consistency or responsiveness to changing need?

The first and second approaches are distinguished from the third and fourth in the consistency and responsiveness of targeted support:

- The first and second approaches, where support follows the child, are perfectly responsive to changes in the number of eligible children within each setting. For example, if the number of disadvantaged children attending a given setting is higher than normal in a particular year, that setting will immediately have additional resources. This is essential for some types of support, such as fee controls for parents, and may be useful for other types of support which can be specifically allocated to an individual child or small group of children. However, year-on-year

fluctuations in support based on individual eligibility may be problematic, such as in Bavaria, where settings receive a subsidy for each child with a migration background. This may be a particular issue if targeted support is needed to cover fixed costs.

- The third and fourth approaches are not so responsive to smaller changes in the level of need in the setting because settings are unlikely to cease qualifying for the targeted support. Indeed, the fourth approach would only result in a change in support if the qualifying statistics for the local area were to change (usually only following a national census). This offers greater consistency in the support, facilitating long-term planning, investment and resourcing. However, these approaches carry the risk of a “cliff-edge” loss of support for settings where transitory but larger changes in the number of eligible children may interrupt the consistency of support.

(4) What is the administrative burden associated with the allocation approach?

Two main sets of factors will influence the administrative burden of implementation:

- Possibly the most important factor is not the allocation process, but the nature of the characteristics determining eligibility. If these characteristics are easy to observe and verify and parents are happy to share such information, the administrative burden will be lower. For example, this process may be relatively easy for criteria based on additional language requirements, but more difficult for eligibility based on extreme need. Readily available sources of verification may also make some characteristics much easier to target in certain contexts: for example, parents’ tax returns used to assess support based on parental income.
- The administrative burden will also depend upon the nature of the process to determine eligibility. The first approach (parents are paid support only from the government) and the fourth approach (support based purely on the setting address) are the most straightforward. The other two approaches are more complex, involving the transfer of information among the government, parents and settings.

(5) Will parents and settings cooperate with the government to implement the approach?

Take-up will depend upon the willingness of settings and providers to participate in the process and cooperate with the government. This will be influenced not only by the administrative burden but also by:

- The relative sizes of the benefits and the costs of participating. The benefits may be easier to measure in terms of monetary value of support, but the costs may be less tangible in the form of foregone time for settings and parents. Parents may also face costs associated with the risks of sharing personal data with settings or the stigma of sharing sensitive personal information or eligibility status. As with the administrative burden, the second and third approaches generally involve greater participation costs when compared to any given level of benefit.
- The alignment of the benefits and costs to the same actors. The first approach encourages participation because actions are required from those who will directly benefit (parents and children). The second and third approaches have poorer alignment: the costs of the application process will be shared but parents may benefit entirely (for example, through fee controls) or the benefits may be diffused across all children in the setting (for example, with the provision of a specialist language teacher). The fourth approach has the advantage that it requires no proactive behaviour from parents or settings.
- Finally, it should be noted that participation in the third approach (support provided to settings based on a collation of children's eligibility) may be particularly weak. Some settings and parents may not participate in the eligibility assessment because there is a perception that the setting will not meet the requirement for support. If this perception is correct, avoiding administrative costs may be an efficient outcome, but incorrect perceptions could lead to settings and children missing out on support.

Summary

In comparing the strengths and weaknesses across the four approaches, there is a clear dividing line between the first two approaches (support paid to parents or support follows

the child) and the second two approaches (support allocated to settings based on collated child eligibility or setting address):

- The first two approaches offer greater efficiency in that the support is well targeted to disadvantaged children and minimises the deadweight loss of support going to less-disadvantaged children. They also offer greater responsiveness in the level of support to changing levels of need at the setting level.
- The second two approaches can offer a concentration of support within a number of selected settings, which may be essential for some types of support, and a limited amount of total funding. They also offer greater consistency over time in support for settings.

Within each pair of approaches, there are also trade-offs, including:

- Within the first two approaches, support provided to parents is best able to target disadvantaged children, is administratively simple and may facilitate higher take-up. However, support provided to settings may be more appropriate if the support requires some concentration of resources within the setting (such as specialised sessions) rather than simply aiming to lower costs for the target child.
- Within the second two approaches, support based on collated eligibility may more closely reach the target children and have greater responsiveness to changing need, but support based on the setting address may offer greater consistency (if neighbourhood statistics are more consistent than setting enrolment), lower administrative costs and greater take-up.

Importantly, the relative effectiveness of these approaches will be influenced by a range of contextual factors, such as the level of support provided, inter-agency communication and the geographic concentration of disadvantaged children. These factors are considered in Chapter 4.

In conclusion, the choice of allocation approach will depend upon the specific nature of the support and the specific trade-offs between efficiency of targeting and administrative simplicity and take-up.

4. Implementation in Ireland

This chapter describes how approaches to identifying disadvantaged children and allocating support could be implemented in the Irish context. Section 4.1 reviews the currently available data that could be used to identify disadvantage for individual children and the gaps in this data. Section 4.2 performs the same exercise for data that could be used to identify local area disadvantage. Section 4.3 considers how these data sources could be linked to allocate targeted support for ELC and SAC, while Section 4.4 considers the implications of Ireland-specific contextual factors.

4.1 Child-level disadvantage data sources

The Irish Government has a record of some disadvantage characteristics of children and families through administrative data:

- **Economic disadvantage:** The Revenue Commissioners (Revenue) and the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) have records of individual income, matched to a parent's Personal Public Service (PPS) number. These records can be accessed by the Department with explicit consent. Parents who apply for NCS also share the PPS number of their partner where applicable, which can facilitate the calculation of family income rather than individual income. Parents who apply for NCS also share employment details with the Department. Some measures of economic disadvantage used in other countries, such as disposable income or wealth, may not be available to the Department.
- **Family composition:** Parents who apply for NCS share information on the number of children in their family aged under 15 years to facilitate calculations of allowable reductions, as well as information on whether or not they have a partner. Both of these measures can provide information on family composition. Some information on family composition can also be inferred from welfare benefits received.

- SEND. The Department already identifies SEND children through the AIM application process, which is jointly submitted by settings and parents.¹⁹
- Migration status. It does not appear that the Irish Government currently holds administrative data identifying children from regional minorities or those with a migration background. The exception is for refugees sponsored by the Minister for Justice and Equality to participate in NCS. Providing support to such children is likely to require new primary data collection, such as by adding questions to the NCS application process or the proposed ELC Online Database.
- Children in extreme need. This set of characteristics is broad and administrative data identifying children in such circumstances is likely to vary. For example, some categories of extreme need, such as foster care or parental illness, could be identified through receipt of welfare benefits such as the Foster Care Allowance, Guardian's Payment or Mobility Allowance. Parents who apply for NCS share information on receipt of such benefits or give consent for the Department to access this information from Revenue and DEASP. Some additional characteristics, such as parents who are homeless or are teenagers still in education/training, could be identified through the NCS sponsorship programme.

It may also be possible for children with some disadvantage characteristics to be identified without relying on the NCS process. For example, data on incomes held by Revenue and DEASP could be matched to an individual child. Alternatively, information collected by Pobal²⁰ from settings as part of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme, including birth certificates and PPS numbers, could be used to match children to data held in other government departments. Such alternative methods may be appropriate, for example, if a significant number of children with disadvantage characteristics are not registered for NCS. However, these methods are likely to require explicit consent and the ability to match children's PPS numbers to those of their parents.

¹⁹ Note that not all children with special educational needs have a SEND diagnosis.

²⁰ Pobal is an agency working on behalf of the Irish Government to support communities and local agencies toward achieving social inclusion and development

4.2 Local area disadvantage data sources

The Irish Government has an established model for assigning geographic disadvantage indexes to primary and post-primary schools through the DEIS programme. This means that a similar programme in ELC could be adapted from an existing approach rather than needing to be developed independently.

The Department can match each address to a Small Area (SA) geography.²¹ The Central Statistics Office Ireland Small Areas Population Statistics dataset contains a wide range of social, economic and demographic indicators for each SA, drawn from the quinquennial census. These include a range of indicators relevant for identifying disadvantage, including measures of marital status, migration, ethnicity, religion, Irish language, family composition, housing, social class, socio-economic group, education, disability, general health and occupation. The Department could construct a composite measure of disadvantage for each SA that is relevant to its policy objectives in the ELC sector. Alternatively, it could use an existing composite measure such as the Pobal Small Area HP Deprivation Index as used in the DEIS model (Haase and Pratschke 2017). This exercise has already been conducted, with all ELC and SAC settings allocated an HP Deprivation Index.

The Department could also augment the SA Population Statistics with data from other surveys in Ireland, such as the Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) or Growing Up in Ireland (GUI). However, because they contain information on a sample of the population rather than the population as a whole, it is unlikely that there will be sufficient information available to enhance the SA-level statistics.

4.3 Linking data to facilitate the allocation of support

This data can be used to facilitate each of the four allocation approaches discussed in Chapter 3, with some exceptions for particular disadvantage characteristics.

²¹ Small Areas are the lowest level of geographic disaggregation for the compilation of statistics, which is compatible with data protection requirements. There are 18,488 Small Areas in Ireland, each containing between 50 and 200 households, an average of 100.

The process for the first approach (support provided to parents) would involve the Department using information on children's disadvantage characteristics and ELC/SAC attendance in order to identify eligibility and provide appropriate support to parents. As discussed in Section 4.1, the NCS and AIM registration processes provide the Department with information on a range of disadvantage characteristics or allow the Department to access this information from Revenue and DEASP. The exceptions are information on migration and ethnic minority background, as well as some economic disadvantage and extreme need characteristics, which may need to be collected separately if required to facilitate the allocation of support. The NCS also provides the Department with information on whether children are registered for ELC or SAC. Information on the number of hours of ELC or SAC each child receives is reported by the setting and validated by parents, with children identified using their unique Childcare Identifier Code Key.

The process for the second and third approaches (support provided to settings and support based on collated eligibility) would involve the Department using information on child eligibility and ELC/SAC attendance in order to collate eligibility to the setting level and provide appropriate support to settings. In other countries, such approaches are more administratively burdensome than the first approach because the government needs to identify both children's disadvantage characteristics and the setting they attend. In Ireland, the structure of administrative data collection means that the burden is similar—disadvantage and setting data are collected simultaneously. Because most methods of identifying disadvantage characteristics rely on the NCS application process, and because NCS data records the setting at which the child is registered, no additional information is required to collate support to the setting level. Indeed, the NCS is designed to provide support to families through settings based on individual eligibility and the same process could be adapted for more general purposes.

The process for the fourth approach (support based on setting address) involves the Department combining setting address information with local area statistics to provide support to settings. The Department currently has a record of all registered settings, including information on their address. The Department could link this information with SA disadvantage statistics to construct a disadvantage index for each setting (this has already

been done using the HP Deprivation Index).²² Support could then be allocated to settings that have a higher disadvantage index. Support could be scaled in line with the disadvantage index or could be provided only to settings that meet a particular threshold (as is the case for DEIS). Support could also be made proportional to the number of children or hours in the setting using data collected as part of the NCS and/or ECCE programmes.

4.4 Contextual factors

There are two contextual factors which affect the relative appropriateness of these approaches in the Irish context.

First, as discussed in Section 3.6, a key factor in determining the appropriateness of some approaches is the degree to which disadvantaged children are concentrated or “clustered” in particular settings or geographic areas. There is some evidence that, in Ireland, geographic clustering is modest “when placed in the context of overall variation” (Callan et al. 2008). The authors note that: “while some geographical concentration of disadvantage exists, poverty and deprivation are spatially pervasive and affect almost all parts of the country at all levels of geographical disaggregation”. This study confirms earlier evidence on disadvantage clustering, notably by Nolan et al. (1994), Nolan et al. (1999), and Fahey and Williams (2000).

This suggests that approaches using setting address (or the home address of children) to proxy for disadvantage in Ireland may lead to poor targeting and inefficient allocation of resources unless combined with individual eligibility approaches.

Second, there are a number of features of administrative data collection in Ireland that favour implementation methods where parents provide information directly to the Department, rather than relying on settings to intermediate. In particular:

²² A similar method can be employed for approaches based on child eligibility where home address is used as a proxy for disadvantage. In such cases, the index could be calculated using the share of children who live in an area with a certain disadvantage index (for example, DEIS identifies children living in SAs that are disadvantaged, very disadvantaged or extremely disadvantaged on the HP index).

- Ireland operates a system where all individuals, including children, have a unique identification number that can be matched to other government records where appropriate. This is not the case in some other countries which either do not have unique identifiers or only have unique identifiers for adults or people earning an income.
- The Department already has a widely adopted, established process for parents to communicate information (including information on disadvantage characteristics) to the Department in the NCS.

These existing processes mean that methods where parents provide information directly to the Department may be easier to implement in Ireland than they would be in other jurisdictions.

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Annex: Sources of evidence

Country	Sources of evidence
Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016) • Australian Government (2020a) • Australian Government (2020b) • Australian Government (2020c) • Australian Government (2020d)
Austria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission (2019a) • Oberhuemer and Schreyer (2018) • OECD (2012)
Belgium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission (2019a) • Oberhuemer and Schreyer (2018)
Bulgaria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission (2019a) • Oberhuemer and Schreyer (2018)
Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Accountability Office of Ontario (2019) • Ontario Ministry of Education (2019) • OECD (2003)
Croatia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission (2019a) • Oberhuemer and Schreyer (2018)
Cyprus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission (2019a) • Oberhuemer and Schreyer (2018)
Czechia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission (2019a) • Oberhuemer and Schreyer (2018)
Denmark	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission (2019a) • Naumann et al. (2013) • Oberhuemer and Schreyer (2018) • OECD (2019)
Estonia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission (2019a) • European Commission (2019b) • Oberhuemer and Schreyer (2018)
Finland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission (2019a) • Oberhuemer and Schreyer (2018) • Hufkens and Verbist (2017) • European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2020)
France	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission (2019a) • Oberhuemer and Schreyer (2018) • Naumann et al. (2013) • OECD (2004)

Country	Sources of evidence
Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission (2019a) • Hufkens and Verbist (2017) • Oberhuemer and Schreyer (2018) • Statistisches Bundesamt (2020) • Scholz et al. (2019)
Greece	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission (2019a) • Oberhuemer and Schreyer (2018)
Hungary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission (2019a) • Oberhuemer and Schreyer (2018)
Italy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission (2019a) • Oberhuemer and Schreyer (2018)
Latvia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission (2019a) • Oberhuemer and Schreyer (2018)
Lithuania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission (2019a) • Hufkens and Verbist (2017) • Oberhuemer and Schreyer (2018)
Luxembourg	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission (2019a) • Oberhuemer and Schreyer (2018)
Malta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission (2019a) • Oberhuemer and Schreyer (2018)
Netherlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission (2019a) • Guerin (2014) • Hufkens and Verbist (2017) • Nederlands Jeugdinstituut (2020) • Oberhuemer and Schreyer (2018) • Statistics Netherlands (2020)
New Zealand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitchell (2013) • New Zealand Ministry of Education (2018) • New Zealand Ministry of Education (2020)
Norway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission (2019a) • Naumann et al. (2013) • Norwegian Directorate of Education (2020) • Norwegian Government (2006) • OECD (2012)
Poland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission (2019a) • Guerin (2014) • Oberhuemer and Schreyer (2018)
Portugal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission (2019a) • Hufkens and Verbist (2017) • Oberhuemer and Schreyer (2018)

Country	Sources of evidence
Romania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission (2019a) • Oberhuemer and Schreyer (2018)
Serbia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission (2019a) • European Commission (2020)
Slovakia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission (2019a) • Oberhuemer and Schreyer (2018)
Slovenia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission (2019a) • Oberhuemer and Schreyer (2018)
Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission (2019a) • Oberhuemer and Schreyer (2018)
Sweden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission (2019a) • Hufkens and Verbist (2017) • Naumann et al. (2013) • Oberhuemer and Schreyer (2018)
Switzerland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European Commission (2019a) • OECD (2012)
United Kingdom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department for Education (2014) • European Commission (2019a) • Save the Children Wales (2020) • Welsh Government (2019)